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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is to illustrate and compare three important levels of expectation, or standards, that have been set for diploma examination writing in English 33 in Alberta, Canada: "3 Satisfactory," "4 Proficient," and "5 Excellent." The booklet presents exemplar papers that were used to illustrate the scoring criteria for group leaders and markers as part of the marker training procedures used in January and July 1994, along with accompanying commentaries, or rationales, that tie the papers to the scoring criteria. Samples of students' writing in the booklet are divided into three sections: Personal Response to Literature; Functional Writing; and Response to Visual Communication. Appendixes present writing assignments for January 1994 and June 1994, as well as the English 33 scoring criteria for 1994. (RS)

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Samples of Students' Writing

from the English 33 Diploma Examinations January and June 1994

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this booklet is to illustrate and compare three important levels of expectation, or standards, that have been set for diploma examination writing in English 33: "3 Satisfactory," "4 Proficient," and "5 Excellent." Exemplar papers that were used to illustrate the scoring criteria for group leaders and markers as part of the marker training procedures used in January and July 1994 are presented here, along with accompanying commentaries, or rationales, that tie these papers to the scoring criteria.

Content

The sample papers are presented by section in groups of three or four. The first paper in each group is the one that was used as the exemplar paper for "3 Satisfactory," and the final paper in each group is the one that was used as the exemplar paper for "5 Excellent" during group leader and marker training. Each paper is accompanied by specific commentaries (rationales) that discuss the paper in terms of the scoring criteria used in marking (see Appendix C). These rationales were written by the teachers who served as standards confirmers before the marking sessions in January and July 1994.

Confirming Standards

The exemplar papers presented here were selected during "standards confirming" sessions in January and June 1994 by teachers who acted as standards confirmers before the marking sessions. Each of these exemplar papers was chosen to illustrate the level of expectation, or standard, described as "3 Satisfactory," "4 Proficient," or "5 Excellent" in the scoring criteria after intensive discussion.

The exemplar papers were presented to group leaders, teachers specially selected to chair small groups of markers during the marking session. These group leaders also confirmed that the exemplar papers illustrated the standards described at the "3 Satisfactory," "4 Proficient," and "5 Excellent" levels. The exemplar papers were then used for training markers of the January and June 1994 English 33 diploma examinations.

The 1994 Marking Process

During the marking of the January and June 1994 English 33 diploma examinations, papers were scored on various dimensions according to five criteria or levels of performance. A complete listing of both the dimensions and the criteria appears in Appendix C.

All marking was done by teachers who were selected on the basis of recommendations made by their superintendents. These teachers were required to be teaching the course during the school year that the examination was administered. They must also have taught the course for at least two years.

Neither the students' names nor the names of their schools appeared on any examination papers. The first hours of the marking session were spent in an intensive training session that included a review of the scoring criteria as related to the exemplar papers. When marking began, markers were advised not to mark a paper if they suspected that they recognized its source. They were instructed to disregard the quality of the handwriting in evaluating the papers and to return a paper unmarked if they thought the handwriting could have influenced their judgements. They were also instructed to avoid marking any papers whose contents or style called forth any personal biases.

No marks were placed on the examination booklets during the marking process. Scores were recorded on separate score sheets. All papers received three independent readings and the median marks were awarded. Provision was made for a fourth reading if the awarded scores varied to the extent that a student's final grade would have been significantly affected.

Cautions

The following cautions regarding this booklet should be kept in mind, especially if its contents are to be used for instructional purposes:

1. **The papers selected represent only a small sample of the possible approaches to each assignment or topic.**
   Even though three or four papers are presented to illustrate responses to a particular writing assignment, it must be remembered that these are merely three or four papers selected from thousands written on that assignment. Therefore, any conclusions formed about common patterns of approach taken by students must be viewed as speculative only.

2. **Neither the assignments presented in appendices A and B nor the scoring guides presented in Appendix C are meant to limit students to a single organizational or rhetorical approach in completing any diploma examination assignment.**
   Students are free to select and organize their materials in any manner that they feel will best present their ideas. The writing in this booklet illustrates just a few of the many organizational and rhetorical strategies used successfully by students in January and June 1994.

3. **The sample papers presented in this document must not be used verbatim as models for instructional purposes.**
   Because these papers are sample illustrations only and because they are sample responses to a set topic, students should be cautioned not to memorize the context of any of these assignments to use when completing classroom assignments or when writing future diploma examinations. It is the *approaches* taken by students achieving at the "5 Excellent" level of performance that future students should consider emulating, not their words or ideas.

4. **Readers should consider each student's accomplishments in light of the constraints of the examination situation.**
   Under examination conditions, students are able to prepare writing that we must consider as *first draft* only. Given more time, and access to appropriate resources, we would expect students to produce papers of considerably improved quality.

5. **The scoring criteria presented here for Section III: Response to Visual Communication will be revised for the 1994–95 school year.**
   Section III: Response to Visual Communication will be marked for Thought and Detail and Writing Skills in January and July 1995.

Samples of Students' Writing from January 1994

Section I: Personal Response to Literature

The assignment attached to the excerpt from Stuart Dybek's short story "Nighthawks" evoked many interesting student responses. This assignment asked students to juggle three concepts—imagination, inner strength, and the facing of difficult situations—a fairly complex task for many English 33 students.

Most students explored positive themes such as "Imagination can allow us to escape momentarily from difficult situations," "Imagination gives hope," "Imagination is a wondrous thing that provides us with opportunities to learn and to grow," and "Imagination, rather than drugs, provides us with a 'safe' escape from reality."

Other students took an opposing view and chose to develop themes such as "Imagination is time wasted; other skills provide the inner strength to overcome adversity," "We should *decide* what we want to be rather than *imagine* what we want to be," and "Imagination is for the weak; it is the doers who get things done."

Most students understood the requirements of the assignment. They commented on the events of the excerpt in light of people's use of the imagination and then commented on imagination, inner strength, and/or difficult situations by referring to their own observations or experiences. Some students, however, elected to retell the events of the excerpt without really attempting to tie these events to the use of the imagination, to inner strength, or to the facing of difficult situations. A few even got sidetracked and wrote mainly about the effects of unemployment. Such students received low scores for Thought and Detail. Many students used quotations from the excerpt judiciously and thoughtfully in their responses; however, some students appeared to be "padding" their compositions by copying copiously from the excerpt's preamble, from the excerpt itself, and from the preamble to the assignment. Again, students who wrote such responses received low scores for Thought and Detail. It is important that students realize that they *must* explore the idea presented in the assignment box on page 3 of the examination booklet if they expect to do well on Section I.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** displayed a defensible understanding of the excerpt and developed a conventional but clear thesis about the use of imagination. Many of these students said that the narrator from "Nighthawks" was using his imagination to escape momentarily from his depression caused by unemployment and that this momentary escape gave him the reserve he needed to continue. In fact, imagination as an appropriate escape was the most common idea presented by students. Generally, students at this level of achievement handled the organization of their compositions well, but their introductions were often abrupt (e.g., beginning with the phrase "In 'Nighthawks' the narrator. . .") and their conclusions short—often a single sentence. These students displayed a conventional vocabulary and generally clear syntax. Most were able to use

compound structures and to compose complex sentences. Occasionally, students achieving "3 Satisfactory" were able to achieve stylistic effects such as emphasis by using a well-positioned short sentence or such techniques as rhetorical questioning. These students had general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics, even though their writing did display the occasional lapse in control of syntax and usage and the occasional error in grammar and mechanics.

Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** responded to subtleties of the excerpt from "Nighthawks," demonstrating well-considered and, at times, insightful understanding of the excerpt and of the expectations of the assignment. Some of these students noted the similarity between the "greasy spoon" that the narrator dislikes and avoids and the diner in Edward Hopper's painting that is, ironically, sought out by the narrator. They saw this as an indication that the narrator realized that his difficult situation was still a reality, still to be faced. Many of these students meaningfully compared the narrator's reactions to the Public Library and the Art Institute with the conditions that must be met to allow the imagination to operate. Observations made by these students and experiences they recounted were detailed, significant, and tied to the theses that they were developing. Students at this level of achievement wrote effective introductions that provided direction for the reader. Often, their introductions were separate paragraphs that explored the topic of imagination and set the context for the development of their ideas. They were able to manipulate syntax for stylistic effect and to use figures of speech and connotations to add to their meanings. These students demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 3 Satisfactory – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

A defensible understanding of the reading selection is clearly demonstrated. The title "The Power of Imagination" prepares the reader for the thesis that follows: "Some people use inner thoughts and imagination to escape the reality of the real world. This enables a person to cope with the situation rather than suffer." Throughout the essay, the student generally sustains this understanding; for example, in the analysis of "Nighthawks," the student states, "Everyday he goes to the Art Institute to drown himself into the paintings. He has the feeling of affection when he is in the captivity of the art." In the reference to personal experience, the writer says, "I pretend I am happy that my family is moving but inside I feel the pain" and "it is nice to find ways to escape for only a while." In reference to the novel *King Rat*, the student notes that "the men were Prisoners of War. The[y] had to obey what the officers said or they would be put in jail." More significantly, "[the men] put on plays, went to classes or created businesses all to escape the reality." The literary example concludes with "Learning to escape by imagination is the only way to survive in this case." In the conclusion of the response, however, the student only makes a very general and mechanical reference to imagination: "It is okay to use the imagination to escape for awhile as long as the person eventually comes back into reality."

Support is general but functional. The response begins with a general statement about losing a job and using imagination to cope: "This enables a person to cope with the situation rather than suffer." Support taken from the excerpt is also very general in that no reference is made to a specific painting but, rather, to "the art." The statement "The character prefers the Art Institute over the dreary atmosphere of the library" vaguely implies that imagination is part of the narrator's choice, but no details or reasons are given to support this statement.

The paragraph that develops a personal experience refers not so much to imagination as to the problem of relocating. However, the student does imply some understanding of imagination in the sentence "I *pretend* I am happy that my family is moving but inside I feel the pain." The last sentence of the personal experience, "it is nice to find ways to escape for only a while," also implies an understanding of the power of the imagination but leaves the reader with no detail about the means of escape.

In the *King Rat* discussion, the examples remain as generalizations, such as "the men were Prisoners of War" and "they put on plays, went to classes or created businesses all to escape the reality." There is lack of detail here about the nature of the reality,

The Power of Imagination.

Losing a job can be very frustrating and depressing. A person may begin to feel discouraged if they can not find work quickly. Some people use inner thoughts and imagination to escape the reality of the real world. This enables a person to cope with the situation rather than suffer.

In the excerpt from "Nighthawks" the person seems to be taking the fact he is unemployed out on himself. Everyday he goes to the Art Institute to drown himself into the paintings. He has the feeling of affection when he is in the captivity of the art. At the public library he seems to be more depressed seeing the homeless and thinking if he will ever end up that way. The character prefers the Art Institute over the dreary atmosphere of the library.

At the end of the month, my

the characters involved, and the events themselves. The second last statement of this section speaks generally of "men [who] survived" and "people who could not handle the stress any longer."

Organization – 3

The beginning, development, and conclusion are functional. A general context is created in the introduction, and the thesis is stated. The body of the essay systematically develops the thesis in three distinct but related sections: reference to the excerpt, an account of personal experience, and reference to literature. The conclusion functions as a general summary and adequately reinforces the thesis.

Sentences and paragraphs are generally related, but coherence may falter on occasion. Each part of the essay relates to the topic in some way. The introduction provides focus through a thesis, the second paragraph reinforces the thesis through a general reference to the excerpt, the third paragraph links a personal experience to the excerpt, the fourth paragraph connects the topic to appropriate literature, and the conclusion attempts to affirm the thesis. There is a definite sense of beginning, middle, and end. Despite these general relationships, coherence falters within the paragraphs. In the second paragraph, the focus shifts when the excerpt is interpreted as reflecting self-punishment. The beginning sentence states that "the person seems to be taking the fact he is unemployed out on himself"; however, much of the paragraph does deal with the effect of art and the impact of using the imagination. The feeling that coherence falters is a result of weak transitions. In the reference to the excerpt, the personal example, and the literary example, transitions are mechanically weak. The paragraphs are linked by topic only.

Matters of Choice – 3

Diction is appropriate but may be general rather than specific. Choices include such generalities as "A person," "Some people," "nice," and "always." The speaker is referred to as "the person." Cliches such as "a vicious cirle," "make it through," and "It is okay" indicate a conventional awareness of language choices; however, meaning remains clear. Overall, the diction tends to be simple and straightforward. There are some attempts to be more descriptive in choices such as "drown himself into the paintings," "in the captivity of the art," "dreary atmosphere," and "die of malnourishment." Also, parallel structure is used to some effect in "put on plays, went to classes or created businesses." The student takes some risk here, and although not always successful, the **choices are occasionally effective.**

father will be losing his job. There is a chance that he could be getting transferred to work in Calgary. I do not have to go until I graduate, but I am still going to miss my friends terribly. I always try to think about other things. If someone brings up the subject I always want to change it. I pretend I am happy that my family is moving but inside I feel the pain. I tell my parents I do not mind because they will be happy, but in reality I want to stay. It is all a vicious circle and it is nice to find ways to escape for only a while.

In the novel "King Rat" by James Clavel the men were Prisoners of war. The had to obey what the officers said or they would be put in jail. Otherwise they put on plays, went to classes or created businesses all to escape the reality. The men did not want to think about the

This writing demonstrates control of the basics, with only occasional lapses in control of sentence construction and usage, and minor errors in grammar and mechanics. In the first paragraph, "A person" becomes "they." There is a shift in construction as well since the infinitive "to cope" requires a parallel "to suffer." Prepositions are occasionally misused, as in the second paragraph where the speaker is drowned "into" the paintings. Some apparent spelling errors, "cirle" and "The" for "They," are only errors in copying, and some difficult words, "malnourishment" and "businesses," are spelled correctly. In spite of **occasional lapses in control, the communication is clear.**

fact they could never see their families again or if they could die of malnourishment. Most of the men survived, although there were people who could not handle the stress any longer. Learning to escape by imagination is the only way to survive in this case.

Everyday people go through hardships but they always make it through. Losing a job can be tragic but there always is another job somewhere else. It is okay to use the imagination to escape for awhile as long as the person eventually comes back into reality.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 4 Proficient – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 4

A well-considered understanding of the reading selection is shown. The first sentence of the response clearly states the student's thesis, and the rest of the first paragraph thoughtfully connects the reading selection to this thesis by referring to pertinent events from the selection. In the first paragraph, the student also develops the thesis by speculating about the narrator's imaginative connection to the paintings. In the second paragraph, the student extends this idea by stating that others can be made happy and content by using their imaginations in other ways. In the third paragraph, the student tells how his/her own imagination is stimulated by music to carry him/her through emotional upsets.

The strength of the response lies in the use of detail to support the development of the thesis. For example, "the paintings give off a certain glow," "paintings had begun to feel like old friends," and "feeling and experiencing the artists intentions of his work" support the "Nighthawks" narrator's use of imagination to comfort, to calm. Details are also given in support of the various uses to which people put imagination—to escape unhappiness and to gain contentment, "read books . . . falling in love with a handsome prince . . . pirate ship on the ocean."

As well, in the third paragraph, which develops the student's personal experience, details are **well defined and appropriate**. The student thoughtfully provides two examples of how mood can be altered by using music to engage the imagination. The student uses music to stimulate imagination as the narrator used paintings to stimulate his imagination and comfort him. For example, music is used to enable the student not only to get through the moods, but also to see that "things are going to get better." The specific details that support this are "I often listen to Metallica, Ministry, or Rage Against The Machine" and "Garth Brooks, George Strait and John Anderson." The heavy metal music is used by the student when he/she is feeling frustrated; the country music, when he/she is "down." When the student delves into his/her music and then his/her imagination, he/she goes beyond simply listing examples to illustrate how imagination can comfort.

Organization – 4

The student introduces the thesis immediately by stating that imagination "can get [you] through any ordeal that may arise and cause you grief." **This beginning provides direction** and creates a focus that is sustained throughout the response. This idea is first supported by mention of "the author's" use of his imagination, which "soothes him," when "he is feeling depressed." The student continues the idea in the next paragraph by mentioning imagination as "a way to escape from the hardships of

I believe that if you have a good imagination you can get through any ordeal that may arise and cause you grief. In the excerpt from "Nighthawks", the author tells of how when he is feeling depressed he goes to the Art Institute and looks at the paintings. The building itself, as the author says, is filled with light, making it seem very peaceful, but it also seems as though the paintings give off a certain glow as he walks by them. The author tells of how it soothes him to walk amongst the paintings, saying how many paintings had begun to feel like old friends. And on the days when he was feeling most depressed he would stand in front of the paintings and stare into them until he felt as though he could be in the painting itself, feeling and experiencing the artists intentions of his work.

Someone who has a good imagination can always find a way to escape from the hardships of life. Either in paintings, as the author of "Nighthawks" does, or books. I feel

life" and carries on in the third paragraph with examples of the use of music to engage the imagination "when I have a bad day or am feeling down." These two circumstances are dealt with sequentially through reference to the use of heavy metal and country music. The student's personal experience carefully parallels the "Nighthawks" narrator's experience in that the music helps to brighten the student's perspective: "I close my eyes and imagine myself acting out the story of the song, or remembering the best times of my life, telling myself that this won't last long, and things are going to get better." The idea that imagination can help one to "get through the hard times without breaking down and giving up" makes the **conclusion appropriate**. Therefore, throughout the response, **ideas and situations are developed by sentences and paragraphs that are coherently related**.

Matters of Choice – 4

Diction is appropriate. For example, "soothes," "ordeal," "peaceful," "amongst," "artists intentions," "fair maiden," and "content" are effective. Even stronger than the diction is the student's **purposeful structuring of sentences for effect**, such as "And on the days when he was feeling most depressed he would stand in front of the paintings and stare into them until he felt as though he could be in the painting itself, feeling and experiencing the artists intentions. . . ." The conjunction that begins the sentence indicates that the student is capable of linking and summarizing the preceding ideas; furthermore, the student handles parallel structure through use of participles ("feeling and experiencing") and verbs ("stand"and "stare"). Overall, this is a complex sentence that is **effectively structured** in spite of its length. Another effective sentence is "Others may walk down to the river and listen to the water, imagining themselves on a pirate ship on the ocean." A variety of sentence beginnings, a variety of sentence types, parallel structure, varying sentence lengths, and consistent point of view—all are stylistic choices contributing to **the creation of voice.**

Matters of Correctness – 5

This writing demonstrates confident control of correct sentence construction. "Someone who has a good imagination can always find a way to escape from the hardships of life" shows subordination, "Either in paintings, as the author of 'Nighthawks' does, or books" shows effective use of a fragment, and "Whatever methods people may use, they always imagine themselves somewhere where they are happy and content with their surroundings" shows correct use of an introductory clause. **Grammar is correct.** "Some *people* may like to read books and imagine *themselves* falling in love wth a handsome prince, or rescuing a fair maiden" shows correct noun/pronoun agreement and correct use of participles for parallelism.

are several ways of escaping from our world without actually going anywhere at all. Some people may like to read books and imagine themselves falling in love with a handsome prince, or rescuing a fair maiden. Others may walk down to the river and listen to the water, imagining themselves on a pirate ship on the ocean. Whatever methods people may use, they always imagine themselves somewhere where they are happy and content with their surroundings.

When I have a bad day or am feeling down, I escape by listening to music. I sit in my room in front of my speakers and turn the music up until I can feel it vibrating my whole body. When I am in a really bad mood and feeling frustrated I often listen to Metallica, Ministry, or Rage Against The Machine, music that is really loud and fast and quite heavy. However, when I am just feeling down I listen to Garth Brooks, George Strait and John Anderson. Country music puts me in a cheerful mood and relaxes me. When I play my music

Mechanics are correctly handled. Spelling is correct throughout, capitalization is accurate, and punctuation is usually well handled even though commas are occasionally missing: "However, when I am just feeling down[,] I listen to Garth Brooks, George Strait[,] and John Anderson." **The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response and the circumstances.**

it is always very loud. I close my eyes and imagine myself acting out the story of the song, or remembering the best times of my life, telling myself that this won't last long, and things are going to get better.

A good imagination is the key to leading a happy life, and being able to get through the hard times without breaking down and giving up. If you have a good imagination, you can get through anything.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 5 Excellent – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 5

An insightful understanding of the reading selection is effectively demonstrated. The student discusses the power of the imagination, considering both its constuctive and destructive potential. Initially, the writer states that imagination is the essential distinguishing quality of humanity—"the essence of thought." This view is effectively developed, and the student arrives at the broader generalization in the conclusion that "Man can live weeks without eating, days without drinking, minutes without breathing and seconds without thinking. But as soon as a man stops imagining he dies exactly then." **The student's opinion is perceptive.**

The student's opinion is appropriately supported by well-defined, specific details. The student begins with a more universal understanding of the power of imagination and its effects, connects it to the excerpt, and then moves to the personal perspective that "It is within inner strength and power of the imagination that we are in fact made individuals based on the difference of our thoughts." The student's personal perspective focuses on the experiences of "Being an artist" and on how the imagination provides both stimulus and relief: "My artistic ability changes directly with my ways of thinking" and "even though I am unable to live in isolation completely from mankind, it is possible for me to move from the city to a remote cove on Vancover Island." The reference to the film *Mosquito Coast* provides a warning of the risks inherent when one man imposes his individual imagination on others: "[Allie Fox] is a good example of an individual who pushed his imagination too far . . . [and] creates the destruction of himself . . . as well as the destruction of the native civilization and his family." In the final paragraph of the response, however, the benefits of imagination predominate.

Organization – 5

The beginning, "Imagination in every individual is the essence of thought," **is constructed to provide direction for the reader**. Sentences and paragraphs **flow smoothly and coherently**. The framework of the essay reveals that there is a logical progression from general to specific. The range of the power of the imagination is fully explored through structured references to "Nighthawks," to personal experience, and to a film. This scope is made coherent through the use of repetition of key words, as in "imagination," "power of imagination," "deep imagination," "we use our imaginations," "without my imagination," and "as soon as a man stops imagining." The intentional repetition of such words as "change" and "decisions" provides

Imagination in every individual is the essence of thought. Without it, People and children could not think, dream or have fears. Every one at some time imagines Utopian and surreal situations and they help us escape from the stress and pressures in every-day life. It is within inner strength and the power of imagination we are in fact made individuals based on the difference of our thoughts.

The power of imagination is expressed well in Stuart Dybecks "Nighthawks." Here an unemployed man finds relief from the stress of job hunting in Chicago by visiting the Michigan Avenue Art Institute. Every painting hung on the gallery's walls was painted because the artist had deep imagination. They could never have been created without the artists compassions and inner thoughts towards the subject. Living in Chicago, Stuart discovers he must use the gallery as escapism from the real world, and not by going to the Public Library. There the library was filled with the homeless and the depressed individuals that were so unfortunate. Perhaps they were that way from lack of goals, or dreams as we are all the masters of our own fait.

transition and emphasizes the effects of the imagination. The response ends with **an appropriate and effective conclusion**. A broader perspective is established with "Mankind as a whole has benefited in several ways with the use of imagination." The last two sentences of the response provide a thoughtful and striking sense of finality.

Matters of Choice – 5

Diction is appropriate and precise, for example, "Every one at some time imagines *Utopias* and *surreal* situations" and "*personal expression* through the *paintbrush*." The student achieves a sense of voice through very convincing personal examples such as "my life in a sense revolves around art and personal expression through the paintbrush." **Many sentences have been successfully structured for effect**: "It is within inner strength and the power of imagination we are in fact made individuals based on the difference of our thoughts." Intentional use of fragments is particularly effective: "Change into a utopia, a beautiful world of animals that have never before . . ." The student is aware of the effect of contrasting sentence lengths. In the conclusion, the short sentence "We would have nothing" gains impact by being placed between two longer sentences. The final sentence of the response, which uses parallelism and repetition for effect and also builds to a logical climax, is particularly skillful.

Matters of Correctness – 4

This writing demonstrates competent control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The presence of minor errors is understandable considering the complexity and length of the response. Even so, errors are confined to spelling; for example, "compasions," "fait," "peice," "extend" (for extent), and "luxeries." Some usage errors are present, such as "escapism" and "effect" for "affect," and some punctuation weakness can be detected, particularly the frequent omission of commas. Some pronoun agreement problems are evident, "Everyone . . . and they help us escape," as are pronoun reference problems, "The Fox family . . . He."

Being an artist I find my life in a sense revolves around art and personal expression through the paintbrush. We use our imaginations for music, arts, literature and even large decisions that may effect the rest of our lives. Without my imagination I would not be able to cope with many of life's difficult situations. My artistic ability changes directly with my ways of thinking. Sometimes I will be angry and disturbed, that piece will reveal confusion and chaos drawn through twisted bodies and disfigured faces. However if I am feeling contentor in need of a hobby away from the carelessness of inner city life the subject will change. Change into a utopia, a beautiful world of animals that have never been near smelt pollution or seen the barrenness of houses that keeps them from land once theirs. While these are being drawn or painted my mind is cleared and I am able to make decisions. Decisions that even though I am unable to live in isolation completely from mankind, it is possible for me to move from the city to a remote cave on Vancouver Island. Our imagination may not tell us what to do or where to take our lives but it can open our

doors of perception and helps us create new solutions.

A film that was studied this year concerning the use and extend of mans imagination was "Mosquito Coast". Allie Fox played by Harrison Ford is a husband and a father to four children, and is an inventer with a wild imagination. He is a good example of an individual who pushed his imagination too far. The Fox family lives in a highly populated and industralized city of the united states. He creates an ice machine and decides to take it and his family to the remote native village of Jeronimo, just off Mosquito Coast in South America. Here, Allie sets up his "Civilnation" and introduces many american concepts and technologies despite the reason he left the retroce in North America. He brings with him American concepts even though he moved his family there so they could leave the luxuries behind and hack life out of the wilderness with their own two hands.

Allie in boing so creates the destruction of himself through vaulting ambition as well as the destruction of the native civilization and his family. Our imagination belongs strictly to us and ourselves only sometimes, therefore mankind must start to be careful not to impose it on anyone else.

Mankind as a whole has benefited in several ways with the use of imagination. Without it, cars and airplanes could not function, artists and musicians would not even exist. Communication methods such as telephones and computers could not link us to remote parts of the world. We would have nothing. Man can live weeks without eating, days without drinking, minutes without breathing and seconds without thinking. But as soon as a man stops imagining he dies exactly then.

Section II: Functional Writing

The January 1994 Functional Writing assignment required students to write a letter of invitation to Ms Maggie Cameron and to inform her that she was to be honored at a Salute-to-Volunteers evening on March 9, 1994, by being named Nalwen's Volunteer of the Year and by being presented with the prestigious Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award. In their letters, students were expected to state their purpose for writing and to provide Ms Cameron with all the information she would need to enable her to participate in and enjoy the evening's program. Students were also advised to use an appropriate tone.

Most students produced satisfactory or better work on this assignment. They used an appropriate and courteous tone, provided a statement of purpose, and included details that would help Ms Cameron understand her role during the Salute-to-Volunteers evening.

Markers noted that, in general, the letters were less well developed in January 1994 than on previous diploma examinations. This is particularly troubling in light of the fact that students had an extra 30 minutes to deal with *Part A: Written Response* in January 1994.

To do well on the Functional Writing assignment, students must be able to anticipate the needs of the letter's recipient—to discern the specific information that this individual needs in order to understand the purpose of the letter and the expectations that he or she is to meet. In other words, the letter writer must be able to assume the role of the letter's recipient and to ask the question, "If I were this letter's receiver, what would I need to know?" It is also essential that students take the time to proofread their letters and to correct any errors in sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics that might be present.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** sustained a general awareness of audience and provided information sufficient to fulfill their purpose, such as the date, time, and place of the gathering. Most students achieving at this level provided a closing to their letters and left Ms Cameron with a means of contacting the letter writer for further information. Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** sustained an awareness of audience and an appropriate tone throughout their letters. They provided specific information that would be helpful to Ms Cameron, such as the evening's itinerary and appropriate dress code, and information about Ms Cameron's expected role—most often, that a short acceptance speech was anticipated. Some students achieving at this level added information that would have been personally helpful to Ms Cameron, such as an indication that she could bring guests to the function or that she could name a representative to accept the award on her behalf. Most made it clear that they were writing as representatives of their English 33 class.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 3A Satisfactory – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

Awareness of audience is generally sustained. This short response is concise and polite, with only a slight slippage of tone in the ambiguous "You will be honored." Paragraph one details who is writing, why Ms Cameron is being honored, and where and on what date the ceremony will take place. Paragraph two provides the exact time and a bit more detail about why Ms Cameron is being honored. A request for contact is made and follow-up is implied in the letter's closing. The purpose of the letter is stated and necessary information is given, resulting in **adequate development of topic**. Although bare bones, **sufficient information is presented** with **enough detail to fulfill the purpose**.

Writing Skills – 3

The writing is clear, simple, and generally correct, although no risks are taken. A variety of sentence constructions are used; for example, the first sentence is compound and contains an appositive, and the third sentence is complex. However, there are only six sentences in the entire response, and one is actually a fragment. Spelling is correct except for "mean time" and "Sincerly," but few risks are evident in the vocabulary. The structure "please respond back" is redundant.

In keeping with this very careful and "safe" piece of writing, the student has taken the time to edit: "accept" and "us." When **proportion of error to complexity and length of response** are considered, the writing demonstrates **basic control**.

Dear Ms Cameron:

I am Pat Jones, A representative of the students at Malwen High School, and I am happy to inform you that you have been named Volunteers of the Years. You will be honored with the Malwen Outstanding Volunteers Award at the Malwen High School March 9, 1994.

Our School will be holding an Awards ceremony and banquet where you will be honored for your times and hardwork as a volenteer at our school. We ask for your presence on March 9, 1994 at 7:00pm to accept this award at the Malwen High School.

If you could please respond back to us in the mean time. We hope to see you there.

Sincerly.
Pat Jones.
PAT Jones.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 3B Satisfactory – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

Awareness of audience is generally sustained. Paragraph one states who is writing the letter, "congradulate[s]" Ms Cameron, mentions her award, and suggests the reason why Ms Cameron has been named. The date of the salute is given in the body of the letter, and the times of various activities are listed. However, ordering Ms Cameron to the gym at 6:45 P.M. (two hours and fifteen minutes before the awards ceremony) causes the tone to slip somewhat. The letter's closing is handled well, and sufficient information is given for Ms Cameron to easily make contact. **Development of topic is adequate.** There is **enough detail to fulfill the purpose**.

Unevenness occurs in this response in that some of the supporting detail is inappropriate. For example, the activities outlined in the third paragraph are not really designed to honor volunteers, which is what the purpose of the letter and the evening is all about. This is an example of a "3" paper that, although it has some length, presents only sufficient information to fulfill the purpose.

Writing Skills – 3

The selection and use of words and structures are generally effective, and **basic control** is demonstrated. There are a few mechanical errors ("Schools," "congradulate," "recieving," "Volenteer," and "Yous Turly"). Some usage errors are present, which careful proofing would have corrected: "help" for "held" and "out" for "our." On the other hand, the words "annual," "ceremonies," and "schedules" are correctly spelled. It is this unevenness that is typical of a "3" paper. Although few risks are taken, **basic control of sentence construction** is shown; for example, "You are welcome to attend all the activities of the night but I must ask that you go to the front office by 6:45 pm so we can prepare for the ceremonies." The communication is clear.

Nalwen High School

NHS

482 Park Crescent, Nalwen, Alberta T9R 1P1

January 13, 1994

Ms Maggie Cameron
16 Nalcreek Boulevard
Nalwen, Alberta
T3R 1P6

Dear Ms Cameron:

I am writing on behalf of the Nalwen Community High Schools English 33 class to inform and congradulate you on recieving the Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award for being our Volunteer of the year. Your work with the mentally handicaped at our school has been a big help.

Nalwen High School is participating in the annual Nalwen Community Spirit week during Feb. 7 to 11, 1994. Our school is holding

a Salute-to-Volunteers evening on March 9, 1994 and will be presenting you with your award that night.

On our Salute-to-Volunteers evening we will have many activities including a bake sale put on by the grade 11 food studies class from 7:00pm to 8:30pm, an art show in the library put on by the grade 12 art class from 7:30pm to 9:00pm, the award ceremonies in the library between 9:00pm and 10:00pm and a dance in the gym afterward from 10:00pm to 12:30pm sponsored by a bottle drive by our grade 10 phys. ed. classes.

The doors to the school will be

opened to the public at 7:00pm. You are welcome to attend all the activities of the night but I must ask that you go to the front office by 6:45pm so we can prepare for the ceremonies.

I can be contacted at the school between 8:00am and 2:30pm at 555-5555 or at home between 3:00pm and 10:00pm at 555-4555. I will be contacting you over the phone with more details. Again I'd like to congraduate you and hope you can take time out of your busy schedule for our Debate-to-Volenteers night.

Yours Truly.

Pat Jones

Pat Jones

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 4 Proficient – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 4

Awareness of audience is clearly sustained. The tone is polite and respectful throughout the response; for example, "extend this invitation," "We are proud to inform you," "honored to present to you," and "Please feel free to contact." **Development of topic or function is generally effective** in that the entire response is clearly and logically organized into three concise and efficient paragraphs. **Significant information is presented and is substantiated by appropriate details that efficiently fulfill the purpose**. The writer immediately establishes the source of the letter ("The English 33 students of Nalwen High School"), the purpose ("extend this invitation"), and the planned events ("the Salute-to-Volunteers evening" and the the presentation of "the Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award"). Supporting details are given in the second paragraph and indicate the location, date, and time of the event, as well as precise details of the program. The letter's closing is effective.

Writing Skills – 4

The selection and use of words and structures are usually effective. This proficiency is seen in such choices as "The English 33 students . . . *extend* this invitation . . . *hosted* during the Nalwen Community Spirit Week." Economy of diction and structure can be seen in the use of controlled prepositional phrases to impart information; for example, "in the auditorium at 6:30 p.m. with the Mayor of Nalwen speaking on the importance of volunteer work." **Competent control is demonstrated.** A minimum of errors appear: a comma error in "honored to present to you, the Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award" and the misuse of the reflexive pronoun "myself" instead of the objective pronoun "me." Overall, this response is a good example of economical writing that is well controlled.

Dear Ms Cameron:

The English 33 students of Nalwen High School extend this invitation for you to attend the Salute-to-Volunteers evening, hosted during the Nalwen Community Spirit Week. March the seventh to the eleventh. We are proud to inform you that you have been named Volunteer of the Year. The English 33 students will be honored to present to you, the Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award.

The awards will be given out at Nalwen High School on March 9, 1994. The evening will begin in the auditorium at 6:30 pm. with the Mayor of Nalwen speaking on the importance of volunteer work. The awards ceremony will begin at 7:00 p.m. via and cake and refreshments will be served right after. Friends and family are welcome to attend.

Please feel free to contact myself or the Nalwen High School office for any information or assistance you may need. You can reach me at 221-1234 or the school office at 221-5678.

Sincerely yours,

P Jones

Pat Jones,

Nalwen High School

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 5 Excellent – January 1994

Thought and Detail – 5

A precise awareness of audience is effectively sustained. In the first paragraph, the student introduces him/herself and identifies him/herself as the representative of his/her class. Ms Cameron is then invited "to our volunteer award ceremony" and is told that the class has "agreed to present you with the prestigious Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award." In the second paragraph, the student goes on to explain why Ms Cameron is being honored: "Since your volunteer work has been greatly appreciated and recognized by many students. . . ." Statements such as "we would like you to make a short speech," "If you wish to bring a guest(s) you may do so," and "We would extremely be honored if you would attend" maintain this strong sense of audience. The closure, which states "at your earliest convenience" and "We really appreciate all you have done," reinforces this precise awareness of audience. Such expressions establish a polite tone that even allows the honored guest to make choices.

Development of topic or function is clearly focused and effective. Writer and purpose are clearly established in the opening paragraph: "I am a grade twelve student . . . I would like to invite you to . . ." Supporting detail is provided in the paragraph that follows, which indicates the purpose of the event as well as particulars of time and place. Expectations of the guest are clarified: "we would like you to make a short speech, after accepting the award" and "If you wish to bring a guest(s) you may do so." Closure indicates further expectations for follow-up by providing sources of contact. Throughout this development, **significant information is presented and is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose**.

Writing Skills – 4

The selection and use of words and structures are usually effective. The organization and word choice of the opening paragraphs clearly set forth the context in straightforward language: "On behalf of my class, I would like to invite you to our volunteer award ceremony." Clear and simple syntax is evident in such expressions as "The ceremony will be held on March 9, 1994, at 6:30 pm. It will be in the large gym . . ." and "Please give me a reply at your earliest convenience." The short sentence "You have been named 'Volunteer of the Year' " is particularly effective and even adds an element of climax to the writing. **The writing demonstrates**

Nalwen High School

NHS

432 Park Crescent, Nalwen, Alberta T6R 1P1

January 13, 1994

Ms Maggie Cameron
16 Nalcreek Boulevard
Nalwen, Alberta
T3R 1P6

Dear Ms Cameron:

I am a grade ~~8~~ twelve student currently attending Nalwen Composite High School. On behalf of my class, I would like to invite you to our volunteer award ~~ceeee~~ ceremony. We have agreed to present you with the ~~P~~ prestigious Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award.

Our school wishes to participate in Nalwen community spirit week, which runs from March 7 - 11, 1994. We have decided to plan a Salute-to-Volunteers evening. Since your volunteer work has been greatly appreciated, and recognized by many students, we would

competent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. No awkward sentences are present except "We would extremely be honored." There are no errors in usage or grammar. The only errors in punctuation are the minor ones such as "towards teens, and others. . . ." **The proportion of error to complexity and length of response** demonstrates proficient writing skills even though few risks of stylistic choice are taken.

like to present you with an award you have been named "Volunteer of the Year". ~~[illegible]~~ & the ceremony will be held on March 9 1994, at 6:30 pm. It will be in the large gym at Nalwen Composite High School.

At the award ceremony we would like you to make a short speech, after accepting the award. After the ceremony there will be plenty of refreshments for everyone. If you wish to bring a guest(s) you may do so. We would extremely be honored if you would attend this award ceremony. The time and effort you have put towards teens, and others has not gone unnoticed.

Please give me a reply at your earliest convenience. You can contact the school at the above address or by phone (463-2954). We really appreciate all you have done for the Nalwen Community.

Sincerely yours.
Pat Jones

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

The markers felt that the photograph, which showed a youngster apparently being disciplined by an adult, was a particularly good one for the purpose of the assignment on Section III. It was encouraging to see that many students responded with fairly substantial compositions. Often, the length of their responses to Section III exceeded the length of their responses to Section II. Generally, students appeared to connect well with the photograph and to respond in a genuine manner.

Three main approaches to the photograph appeared in the students' writing. Many students wrote about "the child in trouble," noting that "Disobedience is not acceptable," "Appropriate behavior must be taught to children who misbehave," or "Proper behavior is essential in our society." These students often employed a moralistic tone. Some students identified strongly with the "girl in pink," noting that "Children are the symbol of purity and innocence—here a child is being unfairly punished by a day-care attendant" or "Children can't be children anymore." Other students took the middle ground and asserted that "As we grow up, we learn new things; some of these things we learn through tough experiences" or "Things that we learn in childhood help us to react, as adults, in different situations."

To have been scored as having created a "satisfactory" response on this assignment, students had to be able to determine an *idea* being communicated by the photograph and to provide evidence from the photograph to support the belief that this idea is being communicated. It was not enough for students to have stated that the photograph communicates a *topic*, such as "discipline," or a *concept*, such as "a girl in trouble." To do well, students had to interpret the photograph fully and to *generalize* beyond the world of the photograph.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** tended to interpret the photograph in a conventional way, often as a statement about the behaviour of the girl or of the adult whose arm and pointing finger are shown. Many students at this level described the "girl in pink," noting her facial expression, hands in pockets, and turned ankle, and interpreted these details as suggesting that the girl was embarrassed or upset. The pointing finger, representing authority, also figured prominently in these responses. Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** provided actual themes about some aspect of the human condition that generalized beyond the photograph. Details from the photograph were selected to support these generalizations. For example, some students noted that the line on the floor formed by the juncture of linoleum and carpeting symbolized the distinction between experience and innocence. Some students at this level also made reference to the choices that appear to have been made by the photographer—such as use of camera angle, cropping, or plane of focus—to increase the effectiveness of the photograph.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 3 Satisfactory – January 1994

Total Impression – 3

The student's **interpretation** is quite **conventional** and is in the form of a maxim about learning right from wrong: "Children all have to learn somewhere the difference between right and wrong." This *is* a generalization beyond the photograph, however, and this idea is backed up with appropriate support such as the indication that children possess "mischievishness" and "devishishness." The student continues to provide support by implying that children are instructed "from higher above" when "older people look down upon children." In other words, details used for support tend to be linked to the photograph but also tend to be generalized.

Coherence falters when the student describes the classroom as a place for children's learning without strongly connecting this to learning right from wrong.

Some word **choices are effective**, such as "devilish," "accents," and "primary colors," while others, such as "gets caught too," are not. Overall, however, choices add to the creation of voice.

This writing demonstrates basic control of syntax. "The snowfakes on the blue boards, the little red box on the floor and what looks like a play room in the upper left hand corner all join together to refect the fact that the room is a place for little children" is a well-constructed sentence with correct use of parallel structure. However, this control is uneven, and all the sentences in the last paragraph indicate lapses in control. Although the writing is generally satisfactory, there are some errors in **usage** ("a happy and *fun* time"), in **grammar** ("are mostly primary colors which *adds*"), and in **mechanics** ("scalded," "mischievishness," "snowfakes," and "devishishness"). This unevenness is often typical at the "3" level.

Children all have to learn somewhere the difference between ~~w~~right and wrong. The little girl in the pink outfit is obviously being scalded ~~for~~ by an older person for doing something wrong. You can see in the background the other little girl running away before she gets caught too. This explains how devilish some children can be. The expression, on the girl's face, in the pink, ~~face~~ shows that she is not terribly worried about getting into trouble.

The photographer chose to get a close-up of the little girl getting scaled, which accents the mischievishness of children. The photographer also chose to have the background out of focus which adds more emphasis to the older person's hand and the little girl in front. The camera angle

is one that is from higher above looking down, just as older people look down upon children. The colors in the picture are mostly primary colors which adds to the fact that it is a daycare (centre) where little children are learning. The snowflakes on the blue boards, the little red pox on the floor and what looks like a play room in the upper left hand corner all joint together to reflect the fact that the room is a place for little children.

With children being very devishishness, they sometimes need to be told (or shown) right from wrong. Telling them this should not be so damaging that they can not be happy and play with other children. Being a child should be a happy and fun time.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 4 Proficient – January 1994

Total Impression – 4

Interpretation of the photograph is well considered and is in the form of a generalized idea or theme. There is an attempt to interpret the photograph as "a learning experience . . . [where] one must answer to someone else due to a mistake." This idea is extended by suggesting that such an experience will pay future dividends; this examination of cause and effect is well considered.

Specific details used for support are well defined and accurate. The generalization about "a learning experience" in the introduction is supported with specific examples: "the elder is pointing at the child letting us know the child is being scolded for something. Both subjects appear to be in a learning facility for young children." Focus on actual details of the photograph include references to the "techniques" and "ideas" of "camera angle," "symbolism," and "focus . . . used to blur out the background." In the third paragraph, a discussion of the idea that people learn from their mistakes also supports the generalized theme.

Sentences and paragraphs are coherently related. This coherence is achieved mainly through logical order and repetition of key words to reinforce ideas. After the generalized theme about "learning experience" is stated, the order of discussion is delineated: "details, techniques and ideas." Each aspect of the topic is systematically developed in the remainder of the response, with a final cause-and-effect consideration given in the concluding paragraph. Key words and phrases are "learning experience," "knowledge," "one never stops learning," "know," "learning," and "wiser."

The selection of words and structures are usually effective. Effective diction is seen in "learning facility," "intimidating and embarasing," and "wiser for it." Structures are varied: "Because we are not perfect life its self can be a learning experience" and "Although recieving correction in life can be intimidating and embarasing it can also be very usefull in the future." However, these are used less frequently than are conventional structures.

While some errors are present, particularly in spelling and punctuation, the writer still demonstrates **control**. This response is a **well-considered** and consistent **interpretation**, logically organized, with competent style and reasonable accuracy.

Because we are not perfect life itself can be a learning experience. Throughout our lives at some points one must answer to someone else due to a mistake. This can turn into a learning experience and be useful for future references. This is the impression one is given by the details, techniques and ideas being displayed in the photograph.

The details in the photograph include a young female child looking at an elder with much concern, the elder is pointing at the child letting us know the child is being scolded for something. Both subjects appear to be in a learning facility for young children. The techniques being used are camera angle, this is high because it appears one is looking down upon the youth. Another technique being used is symbolism because a school

symbolizes knowledge. And finally focus is being used to blure out the background just enough to attract one eyes toward the girl and the pointing hand.

The ideas that arise from this photograph are quite positive. This is because in life one never stops learning and it is impossiable to reach a point where one can honestly say "I make no mistakes and I know every thing there is to know", because humans are constantly making mistakes then they are constantly learning and will become wiser from it.

Although receiving correction in life can be intimidating and embarasing it can also be very usefull in the future. So in all a bit of disapline can only make one wiser for it.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 5 Excellent – January 1994

Total Impression – 5

Interpretation of the photograph is insightful. The student begins with **an effective generalized theme**, "From early childhood we have [to be] taught to obey and to listen to our elders," and connects this idea to its results, "an abiding [i.e., law-abiding] society," and to an ability to "face the consequences" of one's actions. **Purposefully chosen details** such as "the little girl is our main focus," "The girl herself is 1/4 of the complete photo," "a feeling of order," "standing straight up concentrating," and "Look at the girl in the back-ground, she is quite happy" **effectively** provide specificity throughout.

The use of transitions helps to create a smooth flow of ideas. **Coherence** is assisted through the repetition of the key word "look," which gives power to the organization. In the second paragraph, for example, the student directs the reader to look at specific details in the photograph; not only that, but in the conclusion the student supplies a slightly different use of "look"—this time a personal one where the student brings an **insightful** perspective to the closure: "When I first looked . . . but after really looking . . ."

The attainment of voice in this response is the result of **effective word choices** such as "reinforcing," "abiding," "precedence," "variable," "drab," "chaos," and "constricted." Outweighing the few errors of syntax are sophisticated **sentence constructions** such as "Firstly, if we look at the camera angle we can conclude that the little girl is our main focus, and that she has committed some sort of wrong-doing." In this sentence, the student embeds not one but two noun clauses inside the main clause. While drawing the reader into the writing in the following sentence, the student also illustrates balance by the use of parallel participles: "Secondly you get a feeling of order, look how she is standing straight up concentrating and giving full attention to the outstretched finger." Some weakness in **mechanics** is illustrated here; a semicolon should have been used after "order." Many other sentences would also have benefitted from the use of a colon or dash.

More careful editing would have caught errors such as the missing words in "we have taught to obey" and "part" for "party." However, there is **control of sentence construction, usage, and grammar**. A weakness in control of **mechanics** occurs when the writer is using complicated structures without knowing how to punctuate them; for example, "Look at the room around, spotless, another variable illustrating the necessity of obeying the rules." Uses of semicolon, colon—or dash, perhaps—would assist in the economical concision of the sentence.

From early childhood we have taught to obey, and to listen to our elders. Over years of reinforcing rules and laws, we have become an abiding society. The photographer here is illustrating that rules are laws, and when broken, the guilty part must face the consequences of their actions. His camera angles (positions) and use of juxtaposition illustrate this.

Firstly, if we look at the camera angle we can conclude that the little girl is our main focus, and that she has committed some sort of wrong-doing. The girl herself is 3/4 of the complete photo giving her precedence. The angle of us looking down at her gives us the idea she is in some sort of trouble, and this is backed by the look of fright caught on her face. Secondly you get a feeling of order, look and how she is standing straight up concentrating and giving full attention to the outstretched finger. Look at the room around, spotless, another variable illustrating the necessity of obeying the rules.

The feeling you get from the photo is cold and drab, but it doesn't have to be that way. Look at the girl in the back-ground, she is quite happy, this shows that if you obey the rules it is rewarding.

Obeying the rules is part of our life and without it the world would be in a state of chaos. Rules don't have to mean your being constricted, it just means go out have fun, but just keep it safe and don't interfere with anyone else's business. When I first looked at the photo I thought of the sternness and anger, but after really looking I have found that you got to take the bad with the good, because in the long-run it's what makes you develop into the person you are.

Samples of Students' Writing from June 1994

Samples of Students' Writing from June 1994

Section I: Personal Response to Literature

The excerpt from Lotta Dempsey's *No Life for a Lady* evoked many interesting and thought-provoking student responses. Most students agreed with the idea given in the assignment that "an intense desire for success can actually contribute to failure." They developed themes such as "It is apparent that when desire burns in the hearts of men, they must not be over-confident" and "The attempts made in trying to succeed at something in life may be well-intended. We may therefore strive too hard and lose sight of the obvious things that cause us to fail." Some students indicated an awareness of the need for logical thought, rather than emotional desire alone, for success to be achieved. They enlarged upon ideas such as "People may be so gung-ho and set on achieving success that they act blindly, not considering the consequences that might arise from their lack of careful planning."

A few students disagreed with the idea given in the assignment, suggesting that the best way to ensure success is to *nurture* an intense desire to succeed. Some students commented upon our society in general, observing that "Our society, as a whole, is caught in the 'success trap.' We are driven to success; often we fail." One student observed: "Be happy with personal successes no matter what they are. Not all people were meant to be Nobel Prize winners!"

Many students (more than in January 1994) referred to literature as a means of supporting their theses or themes. Works such as *King Rat, Macbeth, Death of a Salesman, A Streetcar Named Desire*, "The Scarlet Ibis," "Horses of the Night," *Ordinary People, Of Mice and Men*, and *Lord of the Flies* were featured. Some students referred to individuals from sports whose intense desire for success has resulted, to some degree, in failure; for example, Ben Johnson and Tonya Harding. Other students referred to movies such as *Stand and Deliver* and *White Men Can't Jump* to support their ideas.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** demonstrated a defensible understanding of the reading selection. These students were able to respond to the selection and the assignment in a conventional way. Generally, students at this level formed an opinion, commented on the reading selection, and then used personal observations and experiences to support their opinions. Many students moralized about the topic, providing advice such as "Look before you leap" and "Don't panic!" Their organizational structures were functional and their developments straightforward. These students displayed a conventional vocabulary and generally clear syntax. Most were able to use compound structures and to compose complex sentences. Occasionally, students achieving "3 Satisfactory" were able to achieve stylistic effects such as emphasis by using a well-positioned short sentence or techniques such as rhetorical questioning. While their writing did contain the occasional lapse in control of syntax and usage and the occasional

error in grammar and mechanics, these students displayed general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. It is encouraging to note that many students used quotations from the excerpt judiciously and thoughtfully and that very few students appear to have "padded" their compositions with indiscriminate copying from the excerpt and/or assignment.

Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** understood and responded to the subtleties of the selection, commenting, for example, on the observation of Lotta Dempsey's husband "That will be your mother." These students tended to be specific in their use of detail to support their opinions. They provided the reader with effectively organized responses that included introductions purposefully designed to provide direction for the reader. Often their introductions were separate paragraphs that explored the twin topics of "success" and "failure" and set the context for the development of their ideas. They were able to manipulate syntax for stylistic effect and to use figures of speech and connotations to add to their meanings. These students demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 3A Satisfactory – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

A defensible understanding of the reading selection is clearly demonstrated; for example, "In the excerpt 'No Life For A Lady' Lotta wanted to be the first one in with her story so badly, that she lost sight of her personal judgement" and "If she would have waited a few more minutes her boat would have landed safely and she would have probly still had made it in time and been the first one in with her story."

The student's opinion is conventional; for example, "Success is a funny thing it just depends on how you go about getting it" and "Success turns people greedy and it makes people lose sight of whats realy important." This opinion is **plausibly supported** by reference to Lotta Dempsey's misadventure and by reference to a **general but functional** example of a relationship between a "girl" and a "guy."

Organization – 3

The beginning is functional but not particularly effective. The writer's main idea, that obsession and desire can bring "disaster" or "great things" depending on circumstance, is presented in the first few sentences. However, coherence falters in the first paragraph when the student shifts from a statement about Lotta Dempsey's loss of personal judgement to "Many people try to succeed in relationships . . ." A critical transition is missing here, and this lack of coherence is repeated between the second and third paragraphs.

In spite of this lack of coherence, **sentences and paragraphs are generally related**. The sentences in paragraph two demonstrate coherence, and paragraphs three and four are related; there is even a transition, "On the other hand," that serves to connect paragraphs three and four.

The conclusion is generally **functional**. In the student's thesis restatement, intense desire is now made synonymous with greed. The student recaps the two supporting references and makes a final statement about the general effects of greed.

Matters of Choice – 3

Diction is appropriate but often **general**; for example, "great *things*," "Success is a funny *thing*," "If you want *something* so badly it may turn out for the *worst*," "during *that time*," "She made him *her whole world*," "finaly he had *enough*," and "*everything* worked out *great*." **Occasionally**, as in "strive" and "obssessed" in the first sentence, word **choices are effective**. Effective word choices also show up in "smothering" and in "controlling and demanding."

Many people strive for success and many are obsessed with it. For some wanting it so badly could mean disaster. But for others it could bring great things. In the excerpt "No Life for A Lady" Lotta wanted to be the first one in with her story that she lost sight of her personal judgment. Many people try to succeed in relationships so hard they may end up pushing the other person away. But on the other hand it could also show the other person how badly and how much they really care. Success is a funny thing it just depends on how you go about getting it.

In the excerpt "No Life for A Lady" Lotta became so selfish because of a story and wanted to succeed so badly that she failed. If she would have waited a few more minutes her boat would have landed safely and she would have probly still had made it in time and been the first one in with her story. Instead of waiting and doing a a good job she lost sight of reality and made a fool of herself. I guess success let her down she wanted it to badly and she lost it.

Relationships are funny things to try and understand. A girl really loved this guy with all that she could and it turned out badly. If you want something so badly it may turn out for the worst.

Sentence structure is generally straightforward and clear. Choices of syntax are even **occasionally effective**. For example, in the final paragraph, the student has attempted to use balanced structures for effect in "With Lotta the important thing wasn't being the first person in with the story it was just getting her story in at all. And with the girl, it wasn't making herself happy it should have been to make a happy relationship."

Matters of Correctness – 3

The student's major problem with sentence construction is the fused sentence; for example, "Success is a funny thing it just depends on how you go about getting it." The student often neglects to use commas after subordinate clauses in complex sentences and before coordinating conjunctions in compound sentences. There are also minor spelling errors when it comes to doubling or not doubling letters ("obssessed," "realy," "finaly," and "turnned"). There are minor adverb abuses, as in "it worked out great" and "get the best of people so bad." In spite of these errors, **the communication is clear** and the student exhibits **control of the basics**.

She wanted this guy to love her as much as she loved him. Instead of letting him she ended up smothering him and pushed him away. But during that time he did grow to love her but he just wasn't happy. She made him her whole world she never went out ~~[illegible]~~ unless it was with him and she never let him go out or she would get mad. And finaly he had enough and everything she worked so hard to get was gone in an instant.

On the other hand if she wouldn't have tried as hard as she did she would have never had him at all. In the start She tried and everything worked out great. But when she started controlling and demanding it made him want something else. He wanted the old her back and wanted some time to himself. I guess success get the best of people so bad it destroys them.

Success turns people greedy and it makes people lose sight of whats realy important. With Lolita the important thing wasn't being the first person in with the story it was just getting her story in at all. And with the girl, it ~~was it~~ wasn't making herself happy it should have been to make a happy ~~[illegible]~~ relationship. In both it ~~turned~~ turnned out for the worst.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 3B Satisfactory – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

The student's opinion is quite **conventional** and is stated in the first sentence. The notion that failure is caused by people's "rush[ing] into things without thinking" is developed throughout the response.

The student presents a **defensible understanding of the reading selection** through reference to Lotta Dempsey's desire to succeed. The student's prediction that Lotta Dempsey's intense desire for success will end in continued failure is defended by reference to her husband's response upon hearing of her misadventure; however, minimal support is generally provided. In the illustration from personal experience (the milk cooler incident), details chosen by the student parrot Lotta Dempsey's experience in the Ottawa River but *do* suggest that the student has gleaned an important understanding from the reading selection: "For example, I once tried to impress my boss" with the consequence that "I had broken many of the bones in my foot." The student's comment at the end of this example, that "I learned my lesson" (while Lotta Dempsey had not), remains general and unsubstantiated, however.

Ideas in the student's response are adequate but stop short of being insightful. There is sufficient detail presented to fulfill the purpose, but the student's understandings are conventional throughout.

Organization – 3

Overall, the response is **functionally organized** in its presentation of a beginning, development, and conclusion. The thesis is directly stated in the introduction, although it is, to some degree, a paraphrase from the writing assignment. The development is achieved through reference and discussion of Lotta Dempsey's situation and through illustration of a personal experience. The conclusion follows logically, with a comparison of Lotta Dempsey's experience to the writer's own, and ends with a moral reflection. The organization remains commonplace in its predictable but **functional** approach.

I think that an intense desire to succeed can actually contribute to failure because when a person wants to succeed badly enough, they tend to rush into things without thinking.

Lotta Dempsey thought that when she jumped from the boat to the river, the sawdust that had built up on the shoreline was packed and solid but she was wrong. Lotta had never contemplated the thought, she just rushed into a situation that was a "no win" one, right from the beginning.

You'd think she'd learn her lesson but I really doubt it because no matter what happens, Lotta Dempsey will want to succeed. My point is that she's done it before, she's done it again and she'll do it some more. I know this because at the end of the excerpt, Lotta's son tells his father that a women reporter fell into the river and the response was, "That will be your mother, therefore making it known that things like this have happened before and she's missed the opportunity she had been trying for and she never learned.

There are many people in the world Today, that could relate to this story, like me. For example, I once tried to impress my boss. I work

Matters of Choice – 3

Diction is appropriate but is more general than specific; for example, "a *person*," "rush into *things*," "I *really* doubt it," "my *point* is," and "Personally, I think *all it takes* to succeed . . . *to get the job done*." The sentences display coordination and subordination but have little variation or risk. **Some choices are effective**, however. "After the milk cooler was removed, I was taken to the hospital" suggests a wry humour, and "You see, no one has to be the first one to report a story, nor, does anyone have to try their hardest to succeed" makes use of balance. Though the image of the accident is effective, the diction is ordinary and few sentence structures enhance the impact of the event. The creation of voice is partly successful, but the student's potential is not completely realized.

Matters of Correctness – 3

The **communication is clear** in spite of **occasional lapses in control**. Lapses in control are seen in the student's misuse of pronouns. In the first and last paragraphs, errors of pronoun/antecedent agreement are present: "a person . . . they" and "anyone . . . their." There is misuse of the relative pronoun, "people . . . that," misuse of the reflexive pronoun, "between Lotta Dempsey and myself," and a comma splice, "Lotta had never contemplated the thought, she just rushed . . ." Generally, commas tend to be omitted or used unnecessarily; in the final paragraph, for example, the student writes, "a story, nor, does anyone . . ." Overall, misuse of the comma is a recurring error. There are some spelling errors: "women" for "woman," "L.t.d." for Ltd.," and "bosses" for "boss's." Generally, however, the student is **in control of the basics**. On occasion, careful attention to punctuation and usage is demonstrated; for example, "Keith said 'No, it's too heavy, we'll do it later, together.'"

at a small store, about 2 minutes from my house, called Hugh Cameron Service Center, L.t.d. and my bosses name is Keith Cameron. One day, I asked him if he wanted me to move the milk cooler back against the wall. Keith said "No, it's too heavy, we'll do it later, together." A couple of hours later, it was time. I knew the cooler was heavy, so I gave it all I had and as I tried to, carefully, change position, the cooler slipped and landed on my foot. After the milk cooler was removed, I was taken to the hospital. There, I was told that I had broken many of the bones in my foot. I had to stay home and miss work for a month. The difference between Jotta Dempsey and myself, is that I learned my lesson.

You see, one has to be the first one to report a story, nor, does anyone have to try their hardest to succeed. Personally, I think all it takes to succeed is time and patience but also, pride in yourself to get the job done, slowly and safely.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 4 Proficient – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 4

This response demonstrates **a well-considered understanding of the reading selection**. Consideration of the ramifications of being overly zealous in the pursuit of success is given before a detailed examination of the topic is presented. The student considers how "your judgement may be impaired. You may not see things for what they really are, but rather what you want them to be" and notes that those who are in a hurry "simply do not take the time to examine what is going on around [them]." The student's **opinion is thoughtful** in that the *causes* of failure are well enumerated.

Three sources of support are used by the student. The reading excerpt is used to good effect, a personal example is well developed and provides support for the student's opinion, and an example from literature is used. All this support is **well defined and appropriate** and demonstrates that the student has a solid understanding of the writing task.

The strength of the response lies in the use of detail to support the development of the thesis. The essence of Lotta Dempsey's experience is readily identified: "If Lotta had not been so blinded with ambition she might have realized that she was about to jump into the river." Of greater significance, however, is the student's use of a personal experience. Here the student provides a colourful narrative account that demonstrates thoughtfulness. The student's determination to " 'knock 'em dead' " parallels Lotta's ambition to succeed. Just as Lotta missed the solid ground, the student missed the cue: both were pivitol points in turning success into failure. Of less significance is the detail given in the literary example where the student discusses the excessive ambition of Doodle's brother: "James had pushed him too much. He had made a serious error in judgement." While the selection of literature and the detail are appropriate, the discussion of "The Scarlet Ibis" lacks impact, especially when compared to the personal example given earlier.

Organization – 4

At first glance, the organization of the response appears mechanical and somewhat ordinary. It is, nevertheless, solid and tightly structured. **Direction is provided for the reader** with the broader perspective that is presented in the opening paragraph. The thesis is directly stated and then expanded through the provision of the supporting idea that will be used to develop it: "In some cases you may be in such a hurry to succeed that you simply do not take the time to examine what is going on around you." Topic sentences in the body paragraphs are blunt but purposeful and do prepare the reader for the support that follows. **The conclusion is** an **appropriate** and efficient summation of the discussion. On the whole, the structure of this

In my opinion, an intense desire for success can actually contribute to failure. When you want something so bad, you'll sometimes do anything you can to acheive it. This is when your judgement may be impaired. You may not see things for what they really are, but rather what you want them to be. In some cases you may be in such a hurry to succeed that you simply do not take the time to examine what is going on around you. When these are the circumstances I beleive that what is a drive to succeed could easily turn to failure.

One example that supports my opinion is that taken from the excerpt "No Life for a Lady". Lotta Dempsey was so determined to succeed that she did not examine her situation closely enough before she acted. In such a hurry to get off the boat and get to a telephone, she jumped right into the river thinking that the sawdust floating on top was solid ground. If Lotta had [redacted] not been so blinded with ambition she might have realized that she was about to jump [redacted] into the river. Instead of being the first person to get to a telephone she ended up being the last person to get to the telephone. I beleive that her

response is unified, coherent, and consistent. **Coherence never falters**, but the structure lacks the polish and flow one would expect in a "5 Excellent" organization.

Matters of Choice – 4

Diction is **appropriate and generally effective**, as seen in such choices as "judgement may be impaired" and "If Lotta had not been so blinded with ambition." In the personal example, the use of idiom (" 'knock 'em dead' " and " 'bust' ") is appropriate and helps to set a definite tone and establish a sense of voice. **Many sentences appear to be purposely structured for effect**; for example, "In such a hurry to get off the boat and get to a telephone, she jumped right into the river thinking that the sawdust floating on top was solid ground" and "I was quite humiliated and a lot quieter then I had been the first time going up."

In the personal example, the student uses sentence variety for effect: "I got to be the main part. I was in fact 'the Christmas Butterfly.' " The student's choice to develop an image of himself/herself on stage shouting his/her lines *before* indicating that he/she had not waited for the cue is also highly effective.

The syntax in the discussion of literature is less effective than in the personal example; however, at times it is successful, particularly in the closing sentence: "His drive for Doodle to be normal *didn't just end in failure but in tragedy*." **Diction and syntax are generally effective**, and the student has used some variety and taken some risks in the choices made.

Matters of Correctness – 4

Competent control is demonstrated and maintained in the response. **Minor errors are understandable** considering the complexity and length of the response. For example, the student misspells "succesful" but correctly spells "success and "succeed" in the same paragraph. The student does write "acheive" and "beleive," yet other challenging words such as "embarrassed" and "tragedy" are spelled correctly. The omission of commas occurs, yet the student correctly punctuates on many occasions. In a few cases, adjectives are used for adverbs, as in "bad" for "badly" and "easy" for "easily." The preposition "in" is used for "into," yet the student correctly uses the preposition "onto." Generally, errors are minor and seem to be due more to test circumstances than to a lack of control of Matters of Correctness.

failure come directly from being in too much of a hurry to find success. She could have been the first one to file the story had she used a little more judgement like everyone else.

my second example that supports my opinion is one taken from my own experiences. when I was in grade one, my class did a play at the Christmas concert called the "Christmas Butterfly". I got to be the main part. I was in fact "the Christmas Butterfly". I was so happy and determined to do my very best. I learned all of my lines by heart. I practiced so much I could have done my lines backwards. when the night of the play came I was determined to "knock 'em dead". I ran out onto the stage and shouted my lines as loud as I could so everybody could hear. Had I not been so eager to get up on that stage and impress everybody to death I might have waited for my cue to go, instead of going up when it wasn't my turn. when my teacher came on stage to pull me behind the curtain until it was really my turn, everybody began to laugh. when it really was my turn to go on I

was quite humiliated and a lot quieter then I had been the first time going up. My first attempt at acting had been a "bust" and I had wanted it so bad.

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my last example that supports my opinion is one taken from a story I have read called the Scarlet Ibis. In this story there are two brothers ; one named James, and one named Doodle. When Doodle was born he almost died and since had been very sick. He couldn't walk or take part in normal activities like everyone else. James always had to drag him around in a wagon. James was embarrassed by his brother and was determined to make him normal. First he would teach Doodle to walk, then run. Soon Doodle would be like everyone else. James pushed Doodle. He would run away from Doodle which would force him to follow. Before long Doodle was walking, but James wasn't satisfied. He kept running from Doodle, forcing Doodle to run after him. One day when James was running from Doodle, Doodle began to run after him but instead of succeeding, he fell down. He never got up because he was dead. James had pushed him too much. He had made a serious error in

- judgement. His drive for Doodle to be normal didn't just end in failure but in tragedy.

These three examples are just a few of many that show how an intense desire for success can actually contribute to failure. To be succesful you must not only have the drive to succeed but you must also demonstrate common sense and good judgement. Without these failure can come very easy.

Section I: Personal Response to Literature
Student Sample 5 Excellent – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 5

An insightful understanding of the reading selection is effectively demonstrated. In the second paragraph, a concise but precise grasp of the excerpt is shown. For example, the last sentence of this paragraph packs a great deal of meaning into a very few words: "Not only does her impulsive behavior cost her the story, but she ends up wet and humiliated." In addition, when the student returns to the excerpt in paragraph six, he/she comments upon Lotta Dempsey's husband's statement to generalize about human nature: "It is far easier to recognize anothers poor judgement than it is to see our own."

The student's opinion—"While striving for a goal, we often become preoccupied with the end result and we forget about what may lie in our paths that must be overcome first"—**is perceptive.** This thesis elaborates upon and adds to the idea, stated in the writing assignment, that "an intense desire for success can actually contribute to failure." The student's opinion is **appropriately supported** throughout the response. Lotta Dempsey's tendency to be "overzealous," "competitive," and "impulsive" is well documented, and the student notes that Dempsey's preoccupation with her goal of "trying to beat everyone to a phone" causes her to "[forget] about her own personal safety" and to act "Without thinking." The student's recollection from childhood about trying to be the first to the playground swings is **well defined and appropriate**, and use of the playground and "skinned knees" metaphor in the last paragraph as a means of universalizing the thesis shows considerable maturity of thought.

Organization – 5

The beginning is constructed to provide direction for the reader. The paradox presented in the introduction—"Human nature is such that in an attempt to achieve great success, we often achieve only failure"—is returned to throughout the response: "Her competitive nature ends up being her downfall," "We must not let our desire for success blind us," and "We have all exercised poor judgement in our desire to achieve." The student's use of the first person plural as a means of engaging the reader **encourages further reading**. The concept of the "path" in the first paragraph that surfaces again as a "road," and the concept of the "goal" that continues in the playground memories and then in the "single-minded" state we experience as we "continue to rush toward that playground," act to unify this response.

Human nature is such that in an attempt to achieve great success, we often achieve only failure. While striving for a goal, we often become preoccupied with the end result and we forget about what may lie in our paths that must be overcome first.

In the story, "No Life For a Lady," Lotta Dempsey is so busy trying to beat everyone to a phone that she forgets about her own personal safety. Without thinking, she leaps from a boat and pays dearly for being overzealous. Her competitive nature ends up being her downfall. Not only does her impulsive behavior cost her the story, but she ends up wet and humiliated.

We have all had experiences in our lives where we have fallen on our faces. I, personally, have been too quick in my actions on a number of occasions. As a child I would race towards the playground to be the first one on the swings. I would often end up, in my frenzied haste, in a crumpled heap on the ground. Not only would I have two knees that were skinned from the rough ~~pavent~~ pavement, but I would be standing in line, bloody and in pain, waiting to take my turn on a swing.

The ideas and situations are developed by sentences and paragraphs that flow smoothly and coherently. For example, the image inherent in "wet and humiliated" is connected to the image presented in the first sentence of the third paragraph: "We have all had experiences in our lives where we have fallen on our faces." The student also moves neatly from the general ("We all") to the specific ("I, personally") and uses logical transitions well; for example, "Not only would I have . . . but I would be . . ." The student moves efficiently and smoothly from the general to the specific and back again. As well, the student demonstrates the use of a transitional paragraph: "We all want . . . will be plentiful."

The **conclusion** is **appropriate and effective**. The restatement of the thesis leads to a sealing of the envelope of thought, taking us once again to the extended metaphor of the playground, complete with the "skinned knees" image. The student successfully weaves the strands of his or her thought into a sophisticated and polished conclusion.

Matters of Choice – 5

Diction is appropriate and precise. Excellent word choices such as "preoccupied," "overzealous," "competitive nature," "frenzied haste," "crumpled heap," "pitfalls," "strewn," and "single-minded" abound.

Many sentences appear to have been purposefully structured for effect. For example, notice the precision and conciseness of "Not only would I have two knees that were skinned from the rough pavement, but I would be standing in line, bloody and in pain, waiting to take my turn on a swing." Also note the parallelism and balance of "Whether its other people, or circumstances beyond our control, the pitfalls will be present, and the dangers will be plentiful."

Choices evident in the writing are usually effective and sometimes polished. The images of the pathway of life and the child's playground anchor the central purpose of the discussion and vivify the experience for the reader. Stylistic choices help to create an effective voice in this response.

Matters of Correctness – 5

This writing demonstrates confident control. The only errors in the response are a few minor errors of omission, the missing apostrophes in "its" and "anothers," and a few missing commas. Given the sophisticated sentence structure, the mature word usage, and the complexity of thought, **the relative absence of error is impressive**.

We all want so desperately to succeed. There are, however, pitfalls and dangers strewn along the road to success. Whether it's other people or circumstances beyond our control, the pitfalls will be present, and the dangers will be plentiful.

Stopping to think before we act is of utmost importance. We must not let our desire for success blind us. Lotta Dempsey learned the hard ways, as we often learn the hard way.

Lotta Dempsey's husband's statement when hearing of the woman falling in the Ottawa River, "That will be your mother", was humorous, but it also made a point. We often do not see what is in front of us. It is far easier to recognize another's poor judgement than it is to see our own.

We have all exercised poor judgement in our desire to achieve. Knowing the result of our hasty behaviour beforehand would be invaluable, but it is impossible. Maybe someday our ways will change; but for now I believe we will remain single-minded in our desire to achieve greatness. We will continue to rush toward that playground, and we will continue to skin our knees from time to time. This is what is known as learning from experience, and we will all probably learn a lot.

Section II: Functional Writing

The June 1994 Functional Writing assignment required students to assume the role of the secretary of the Students' Union of Nalwen High School and to write to the principals of the junior high schools in the County of Nalwen informing them of an open house for Grade 9 students to be held at Nalwen Composite High School. In their letters, students were expected to provide the principals who were to receive the letter with full information so that the principals would be able to support the open house and promote it with their Grade 9 students.

Most of the students understood the assignment and produced satisfactory letters. They used an appropriately polite tone, provided a statement of purpose, and included enough detail to fulfill that purpose.

Unfortunately, as was the case in January 1994, too many of the letters were quite short and appeared to have been rushed. These letters merely repeated the information that was provided in the assignment and only partially fulfilled the expected purpose.

To do well on the Functional Writing assignment, students must be able to anticipate the needs of the letter's recipient—to discern the specific information that this individual needs in order to understand the purpose of the letter and the expectations that he or she is to meet. In other words, the letter writer must be able to assume the role of the letter's recipient and to ask the question, "If I were this letter's receiver, what would I need to know?" It is also essential that students take the time to proofread their letters and correct any errors in sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics that might be present.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** provided enough general information to fulfill the purpose of the letter, including an indication of the "other events" that were planned for the Grade 9 students. Many of these students made a direct request to the principals who were to receive the letter, asking them to support the open house. Some of these students provided appropriate closure, indicating their expectation that the principals reply to the letter. Other students, however, closed their letters with a "thank you" rather than a request for a reply. These students may have imagined a scenario in which the open house is an annual event, well known to the junior high school principals.

Many students who received **"2 Limited"** on this assignment neglected to address, in any way, the last sentence in the assignment box; "Provide all of the information that the junior high school principals will need to promote the open house." Some of these students lost sight of their audience part way through their letters—beginning with an address to the principal and then shifting to a direct address to the Grade 9 students.

Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** demonstrated a precise and sustained awareness of audience. Their letters were enhanced by the inclusion of specific details that provided the principals who were to receive the letter with complete information about the plans that had been made for the open house. Most of these students supplied reasons why the principals should promote the open house, citing, for example, the importance to students of a smooth transition between junior high school and high school. Most of these students were not only aware of the need for a response from the letter's receiver, but also gave details as to how the response could be made.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 3A Satisfactory – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

Awareness of audience is generally sustained; for example, "I would like to invite your grade nine students . . ." This writer never loses sight of the fact that he or she is writing to a specific junior high school principal. An appropriate, courteous tone is established and sustained throughout.

The student understands the specific function of the task: "On behalf of Nalwen High School, I would like to invite your grade nine students to attend our open house" and "We are looking forward to seeing your students attend our open house. . . ." Just enough detail is provided to give the principals receiving the letter an understanding of what is being requested: "Our open house will be held on November 19, 1994 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Our grade 10–12 students will be giving tours, acting as guides and informing future student of the programs and facilities offered. . . ." Mention of "other activities" is made, and this may help the principals to promote the open house to their Grade 9 students. Consequently, the mimimum requirements of the assignment are fulfilled.

Writing Skills – 2

Diction and syntax are adequate in this letter, but too many mechanical errors are made. Nalwen High School becomes, first, "Nalwens high" and then "Nalwen's High." Missed commas and the missing plural in "future student" indicate lack of proofreading. The final paragraph, really the final sentence, contains four errors: a comma is missing before the coordinating conjunction, the words "helpfull" and "comming" are misspelled, and Nalwen County becomes "Nalwen Country." All of this indicates **faltering control**. Matters of Correctness are not handled well enough to call this letter "Satisfactory" for Writing Skills.

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of Nalwen High School, I would like to invite your grade nine students to attend our open house. During Education Week at Nalwene high, all grade nine students in Nalwen Country are welcome to join us.

Our open house will be held on November 19, 1994 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Our grade 10-12 students will be giving tours, acting as guides and informing future student of the programs and facilities offered at Nalwens High. Other activities will be going on in the gymnasium and your students are welcome to take part in the activities after the tours.

We are looking forward to seeing your students attend our open house and we hope we are helpfull in assisting the up and comming High School students of Nalwen Country

Sincerely

P. Jones

Pat Jones, Secretary.

Nalwen High School, Student Union.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 3B Satisfactory – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 3

Awareness of audience is generally sustained. While the student begins with a general description of the open house, he or she ends with quite a specific request to the junior high school principals receiving the letter: "if you wish to send your students, please arange for your own bussing and give us a reply by Sept. 15 to allow us enough time to arange guides for tours." Tone is appropriate throughout.

Sufficient information is provided to fulfill the purpose. Such details as the opening invitation, the need to arrange for bussing, and the expected reply date all contribute to the development of purpose. The personal anecdote and the sentences that follow it provide information that will not only allow the principal to promote the open house, but also provide him/her with reasons for doing so.

Writing Skills – 3

The selection of words and structures are generally effective. Many sentences are of the "subject-verb" variety, but quite a few are complex in structure. The last sentence of the letter is a good example of syntactic complexity (less so of logic, however). An occasional parallel structure is used for effect; for example, "all the bigger kids, new teachers, new town, and strange kids in my classes" and "This program will allow students to meet the kids they will be going to school with next year and to get aquainted with the school and the teachers." **Basic control** of usage and mechanics is evident despite missing paragraph indentions, missing commas, and the occasional spelling error ("aquainted" and "arange"). The **proportion of error to complexity and length of response** makes this exemplar a "3" in Writing Skills.

Nalwen High School

NHS

432 Park Crescent, Nalwen, Alberta T6R 1P1

June 13, 1994

Principals
County of Nalwen Junior High Schools

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to bring it to your attention that on the 14th of November 1994, Nalwen High School would like to invite all the grade nine students from the county of Nalwen to an open house. The open house will be held from 9:00 am to 3:00 p.m. Students from the high school will be acting as guides for the grade nines. Each high school student will take a small group, and lead a detailed tour of the school outlining all the facilities and class locations. When I was in grade nine there was

no offer like this to my school. I spent the whole summer worrying about high school. I didn't know where anything was and I was scared of all the bigger kids, new teachers, new town, and strange kids in my classes. Also I was lost when I tried to find my way around the big school. This program will allow students to meet the kids they will be going to school with next year and to get aquainted with the school and the teachers. When the students begin in high school they will be much more relaxed and confident. The tours will be beggining at 9:00 am so if you wish to send your students. please

arange for your own bussing and give us a reply by Sept. 15 to allow us enough time to arange guides for tours.

Yours Truly,

Pat Ford.

Secretary, Hawken High School Students Union.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 4 Proficient – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 4

Awareness of audience is clearly sustained and is conveyed by the type of detail included by the letter writer and the kinds of observations made, observations such as "our guests the grade nine students," "get to know the staff," "meet new teachers," "great opportunities for both of our schools and students," and "some of the finest teachers."

The opening paragraph hints at the benefits to the Grade 9 students of attending the open house. In the remainder of the letter, the details of the event are well chosen to promote the open house, providing a variety of activities that will be appealing to both the academic and the general student. Moreover, **significant information is presented**. The letter writer's position is reinforced by examining the benefits for both schools with the allowance for both core and optional activities. The tours are in the morning and the hands-on experience is left to student choice in the afternoon. In addition, practical information, such as bussing and catering arrangements, together with contact date (Nov. 10) and method (555-5555), **efficiently fulfill the purpose**.

Please Note: Not all "4" responses are this long.

Writing Skills – 3

The selection and use of words and structures are generally effective. Word choices such as "graciously" and "guests" assist in making this response occasionally effective. A variety of sentence beginnings aid as well; for example, "Starting at 9:00 am," "This tour enables," and "After the tour and sport games." Unfortunately, a variety of errors is also present, perhaps the most startling being the use of "transported" for "provided." Verb tense shifts, shifts in person, vague pronoun reference, and occasional spelling and punctuation errors combine to keep this response at the "3" level in Writing Skills. Considering the **complexity and length of response**, however, the **writing demonstrates basic control**.

Nalwen High School

NHS

432 Park Crescent, Nalwen, Alberta T6R 1P1

June 13, 1994

Principals
County of Nalwen Junior High Schools

Dear Sir or Madam:

I represent Nalwen High School and we would like to inform you of our annual open house call held at Nalwen High School nine November 19/94 for all ~~8~~ grade 9 students entering high school here next year. This will give them an opportunity to see the facilities and grounds of Nalwen High School.

We will be having activities through out the day starting at 9:00 am and ending at 3:00 pm. The high school students have most graciously offered to donate there time to take small groups of grade 9 nine students and show them around Nalwen High School.

Starting at 9:00am, we will be having a breakfast for our guests the grade nine students. Our tour will follow the breakfast and will start at 10:00am. This tour enables the grade nine students to meet some other people and get to know the staff as well as the students. Other activities such as basketball, floor hockey and all sorts of other sports will be held at the High School for the grade nine students to try, this activity will start at 11:00am.

After the tour and sport games, again small groups of grade nine students will go class to class and actually sit through some of the classes which are going on so that they can see how things are run at the school and so they may meet new teachers they will be having next year. After this is done we will give the grade nine students a chance to go by themselves to look around and see the grounds of their school. This will give the young students to talk to teachers about picking classes for next year. During this we will also be holding a pizza dinner for the grade nine students

These events are a great opportunities for both of our schools and students. It gives us both a chance to meet one another and make new friends. It will also give them a great opportunity to check out all of our programs such as Home Economics, Mechanics, Industrial Arts and many more. We have some of the finest teachers teaches in the province and we are positive the kids would enjoy themselves greatly. Busing will be transported by us for no charge. We ask that the grade nine students be ready to leave at 8:30am, as we have other schools to pick up as well. Breakfast and lunch will be donated by us as well so the kids would not have to bring a lunch or snacks if they want to. We want these young students to feel as if they were at home, not strangers. We would like you to contact us by Nov. 10/94 for your response, and if you have any further questions, please feel free to call us at 555-5555 Malwen High School.

Yours Sincerly,
Pat Jones,
Secretary,
Malwen High School
Students Union.

Section II: Functional Writing
Student Sample 5 Excellent – June 1994

Thought and Detail – 5

A precise awareness of audience is effectively sustained through a polite tone in expressions such as "We would like to invite you" and "We hope to have your support." **The development is clearly focused and effective.** The response begins confidently with "I am writing to you on behalf of the Nalwen High School Students' Union." The initial statement of purpose is followed by significant detail presented in an appropriate chronological order, which structures the response without being overly mechanical. **Significant supporting details effectively fulfill the purpose.** The statement "The day will begin by the high school students of our school taking small groups of grade 9 students on a tour of the high school" is clarified by details that indicate place and purpose. Plans for special activities are then outlined. There is particular attention to audience in the inclusion of choices or options for those who will be attending. An effective closure is provided, courteously soliciting both support and reply: "if you plan on attending please send a list of names of your grade 9 class along with your response. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact the school office at 555-1234."

Writing Skills – 4

In this rather lengthy response, the student has used the opportunity provided to create some variety in both diction and syntax. For example, the student leaves the principals options by creating conditions of choice: "if you plan on attending" and "If you have any questions or concerns you may contact . . ." The style is purposeful, clear, and direct, if unadorned. While many sentences are simple, the introductory subordinate clause is used to provide some variety; for example, "When touring the gym they will be able to have a look at the sports programs offered. . . ." The time sequence is indicated by such expressions as "For the afternoon" and "The day will end. . . ." Considering the length and the pressure of time, the student demonstrates **competent control** of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors are minor and seen in such things as choice of prepositions ("The day will begin by the high school students"), an error in parallelism ("the students will be told what the classes consist of, what they are like, and meet with the teachers"), a comma splice ("I have included an addressed, stamped envelope for your reply, if you plan on attending please send . . ."), and errors of capitalization ("education week"). However, no spelling errors are in evidence except for the word "liabrary." (The missing "e" in "lik" is a slip of the pen and does not appear in the rough work.) Considering the length of the response and the risks taken, the student has demonstrated proficient writing skills.

Nalwen High School

NHS

432 Park Crescent, Nalwen, Alberta T6R 1P1

June 13, 1994

Principals
County of Nalwen Junior High Schools

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Nalwen High School Students' Union. Our school is hosting an open house for all Grade 9 students in the County of Nalwen, during education week, on November 19, 1994, from 9:00am - 3:00pm. There will be a tour of the school and other events have been planned as well. We would like to invite you and your Grade 9 class to come and take part in this event.

The day will begin by the high school students of our school taking small groups of grade 9 students on a tour of the high school. This tour will include being shown where everything is in the school such as the cafeteria, library, gymnasium,

and classrooms. When going along the tour the students will be told what the classes consist of, what they are like, and meet with the teachers and question them if they have any questions. When touring the gym they will be able to have a look at the sports programs offered, such as, volleyball, basketball, baseball, badminton, track and field and see what interests them most. There are many programs offered at the school in practically every area. There is a band, choir, outdoor education club, poetry club and drama club. The students will be told what these programs are about and be able to see how they are run. The tour should end at about eleven am and then the group can go to the cafeteria for lunch, and question their hosts about anything else they wish to know.

In the afternoon the teachers have planned special activities having to do with the courses they teach. At this time the group can decide together what interested them most in the morning tour, go to these classrooms and take part in

the activities with the teachers. An example would be that our drama teacher has put skits together that the group will have to act out together in front of some of the other groups, and our science teacher put some lab experiments together that the group can do. The day will end with a speech from our high school principal in the gymnasium which includes a slide show about the school.

We hope to have your support in making this event successful by having you and your grade 9 class as our guests on this day. I have have included a self addressed, stamped envelope for your reply, if you plan on attending please send a list of names of your grade 9 class along with your response. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact the school office at 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Pat Jones

Secretary, Malwen High School Students Union.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

The photograph shows a white girl playing with six black girls in a open area. All the girls are dressed in what appears to be a native African costume and are together in a moving circle on the grass. The photograph is centered on the white girl, who is smiling broadly. The six black girls appear to have thoughtful, or even troubled, looks on their faces. The background of the photograph is dark and unfocused, and the black girls blend into the background even though they are in focus. The sun is shining on the scene and highlights the white girl, who is the main focal point of the photograph.

This photograph generated a variety of responses, the majority of which dealt with racism, prejudice, and the innocence of children. Students explored such themes as "Things are easier for you if you are white," "The word 'prejudice' means nothing to young children," and "In a strange and subtle way, different races are demonstrating acceptance." Most responses were reflective of the students' warmth and awareness of human values.

It is encouraging to note that most students appeared to have had little difficulty in interpreting the photograph and providing some sort of generalization. Many students referred, in a general way, to details from the photograph or to the photographer's techniques in the composition of the photograph, but many neglected to refer to details or to choices after their generalizations had been stated. Unfortunately, some of the less successful students used the photograph as a springboard for their own narratives and did not analyze its message and visual impact.

To be scored as having created a "satisfactory" response on this assignment, students had to be able to determine an *idea* being communicated by the photograph and to provide evidence from the photograph to support their belief that this idea is being communicated. It was not enough for students to state that the photograph communicated a *topic*, such as "innocence," or a *concept*, such as "girls playing in a field." To do well, students had to interpret the photograph fully and to *generalize* beyond the world of the photograph. Students also had to refer to details from the photograph and to the photographer's choices to support their ideas.

Students achieving **"3 Satisfactory"** interpreted the photograph in a conventional way, usually as a statement about positive relations between races. Some of these students tended to overgeneralize about details from the photograph, seeing all of the girls as having smiling faces, for example. Students achieving **"4 Proficient"** and **"5 Excellent"** presented insightful interpretations of the photograph. Although many of these students discussed racism, they perceived it as being a subtle element of the situation presented.

Several of these students commented upon the contrast between the white girl's confidence and the black children's uncertainty. The students achieving the standard of excellence explained how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices reinforced their interpretations. These students commented upon details from the photograph; for example, "the circle symbolically represents a unifying element" and "the color green as represented in the grass skirts and foliage symbolizes innocence." These students also examined the photographer's choices such as centering, camera angle, and plane of focus.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 3 Satisfactory – June 1994

Total Impression – 3

The student's **interpretation** is quite **conventional** and is in the form of a maxim about the nature of children: "children are colorblind." This is the thesis statement, and this idea is backed up with appropriate, albeit general, support such as the statement that "The children convey humanity as it should be, without racial bounderies" and the observation that the children in the photograph are sharing friendships. The student continues to provide support in the second paragraph by suggesting that the lack of "bounderies" in "the setting of the photograph" supports the notion that there should be no boundaries "within human nature." **Support is clear** but tends to be **generalized**.

Some choices are effective, such as the use of the words "colorblind," "convey," "signifies," and "content," while other choices are less successful; for example, "the ideas in the setting of the photograph" and "The setting is an example of freedom." Overall, however, **choices** are **generally effective**.

The writing demonstrates control of syntax. This control is clearly demonstrated in the sentence "These children show innocence and are harmless in society, because as this picture conveys, they can do no wrong unless they are told to do wrong," which uses interrupted movement for effect. Mechanics are also controlled by the student. For example, spelling errors are infrequent ("bounderies," "amoung," and "sence"), and control is demonstrated throughout in subject/verb agreement and appropriate use of pronouns.

The idea the photographer is showing with this photograph is that children are colorblind. The children convey humanity as it should be, without racial boundaries. This photo shows the love the children have for one another and the friendships they share. Children do not become prejudiced by themselves, they are taught this by others. These children show innocence and are harmless in society, because as this picture conveys, they can do no wrong unless they are told to do wrong.

The photographer's choices reinforce the ideas in the setting of the photograph. The children are playing in the outdoors and this symbolizes nature. There are no boundaries in nature as there (~~are~~) shouldn't be within human nature. There is harmony (~~among~~) in nature and the outdoors which (~~symbols~~) signifies the harmony among the children. Nature is peaceful and people of different races are to be content living together in society. The setting is an example of freedom and also a sence of security that we should feel with one another.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 4 Proficient – June 1994

Total Impression – 4

The writer provides a **well-considered interpretation** of the photograph expressed in a **generalized** (and quite complex) **theme** concerning racism and the attributes of children: "among many young ones in our society, these adult problems do not exist." The writer uses specific details to support this theme: "seven children playing together . . . all black, except one is white," "shows a form of unity between them." The writer demonstrates how the photographer's technique contributes to the writer's interpretation of the photograph: "The main focus seems to be on the white child since she is the front most part of the picture, and the other children seem to blend in the darkness . . . this could be an attempt in showing the world that white people think that they are more dominant than others." One of the writer's strengths is the inclusion of qualifiers: "among many young ones in our society, these adult problems do not exist," "shows a form of unity," and "this could be an attempt"; the writer avoids sweeping emotional generalizations.

The paragraphs are coherently related and each develops an aspect of the child/adult theme. The vocabulary and structures are **usually effective**: "racism being one of them," "the meeting of differences," "the future is unwritten." The sincere tone is particularly effective, and although some of the word choices might be questioned ("obsolete" and "disgusting differences"), they do serve to support the writer's sincerity. The theme, the supporting details, and the structures used all contribute to the creation of a well-considered response.

In today's world, there are many problems that we face, racism being one of them. Despite the fact that there are some people trying to contribute to world peace, among many young ones in our society, these adult problems do not exist. Sometimes when we look at young ones, it encourages us to be like them because some problems are obsolete.

In the photograph, the photographer captures seven children playing together. These children in the photo are all black, except one is white. The fact that these seven girls are playing together, shows a form of unity between them, and that the colour of their skin has no significance. We also see that the photographer catches the white girl in the front to show her long blonde hair and contrast it with the short black hair of the other girls, showing that the meeting of differences are not met with violence or opposition. Seeing that

they are all children and the colour of skin does not effect them, it goes to show that it should not effect adults either.

We can see that the photo is taken from a fair distance and from straight ahead in order that all the children can be captured in the photo. The main focus seems to be on the white child since she is in the front most part of the picture, and the other children seem to blend in the darkness of the photo behind her; this could be an attempt in showing the world that white people think that they are more dominant than others. Also, the fact that there are more black people in this photo could also show that in the world today there are more black people than there are white people. Altogether though, it goes to show that if we can get along as these children do, the world would be a lot more peaceful.

Despite the fact that racism does exist right now, the future is unwritten

for many people. Like the photographer points out in his picture, to get along as children do, without the disgusting differences in skin colour, hair style, and culture. This photograph shows that racism is a problem blown out of proportion, and that it can be defeated if we act as children do. Like adults in a childs world, these problems would not exist.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication
Student Sample 5 Excellent – June 1994

Total Impression – 5

Interpretation of the photograph is insightful and is in the form of a generalized idea or theme. "The photographer is communicating the idea of difference among society" states the subject of the response. The writer then suggests several possible ideas relating to differences and to changes; these observations culminate in the generalized idea of what is now and what could be.

The **details** used to communicate the **interpretation** are interwoven with the photographer's choices. The writer deals with both aspects of the assignment in a more fluid fashion than most students might. The first aspect discussed is how colour is a symbol: "A white girl surrounded by black girls is symbolic of difference." This difference also pertains to "standard of living and wealth, classes, minority and majority." The observation that the framing in the photograph is "unique" enlarges further on the concept of contrast as the white girl is a "bright object" in a "dark setting." The writer concludes with the observation that "The future for society is a place where the light is, the place where the white girl is surrounded by blacks and knows she can smile." The development, although lacking some polish, is subtle. Another idea that the photograph communicates is that of assimilation, "a white girl who is being assimilated into black society." The writer perceives this as ironic as it is "usually the blacks that are assimilate into white society." The student moves back and forth through the development effectively. **Specific details are well defined and accurate. Coherence** is aided by the use of logical transitions; for example, "The focus of this . . ."

The selection and use of words and structures are usually effective, for example, "The difference in society is not isolated to only color and ethnic background but difference in standard of living and wealth," "The girls are in a good place, a bright one, a place free from prejudice in which colors can combine," and "The darkness in the background possibly behind the forest, which acts as a barrier, is the bad place, a place where racism and prejudice exist and minorities are classified, perhaps a place that we presently still live in." Considering the complexity of the response, **this writing demonstrates confident control** in Matters of Correctness.

The photographer is communicating the idea of difference among society. The photographer is using race to show the existance of difference. A white girl surrounded by black girls is symbolic of difference. The difference in society is not isolated to only race and ethnic background but difference in standard of living and wealth, classes, and minority and majority. The white girl in the photo is symbolic of the difference, the photographer uses color to illustrate the difference. The white girl is a punctum in the photograph and illustrates another idea. The photographers framing of the photograph is unique because it creates a dark setting with focus on a bright object that does not fit in. The white girl is significant in the framing of the photograph because she is the centre of the setting surrounded by girls who appear to be more natural. The photograph communicates

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the ideas of natural and changed. This photograph involves a natural environment in which something was changed in it. The white girl is the part of the environment that was changed. Another idea the photograph communicates is the idea of assimilation. The situation in the photograph illustrates a white girl who is being assimilated into black society. The focus of this is on the dress the girl is wearing and the environment she is in. The situation is ironic because it is usually the blacks that are assimilate into white society. The photographers choice of lighting supports the idea of two existing places, one good and one bad. The girls are in a good place, a bright one, a place free from prejudice in which colors can combine. The darkness in the background possibly behind the forest, which acts as a barrier, is the bad place, a place where racism and prejudice exist and minorities are classified, perhaps a place that we presently still live in. The future for society is a place where the light is, the place where the white girl is surrounded by blacks and knows she can smile.

Appendix A: January 1994 Writing Assignments

SECTION I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO LITERATURE
(Suggested time: 75 minutes)

Read the excerpt from the short story "Nighthawks" and complete the assignment that follows.

from NIGHTHAWKS

This excerpt is set in present-day Chicago. The unemployed narrator compares his experiences of "killing time" at two locations, the Public Library and the Art Institute. The italicized titles in the excerpt refer to paintings that are hanging in the Art Institute.

Between job interviews, I'd wander around the Art Institute, killing time. The Art Institute was on the park side of Michigan Avenue, across the street from the towering office buildings in which the employment agencies were situated. It felt soothing to drift among the paintings. Several had begun to feel like old friends. Visiting them beat sitting over a lukewarm coffee in some greasy spoon,[1] spending another afternoon studying not only the Want Ads, but the faces of the others at the counter who sat nursing their coffees as they grimly studied the Want Ads too. By now, I spotted their faces everywhere. I'd become aware of an invisible army armed with Want Ads, pounding the pavement, knocking on doors, hoping opportunity would answer.

The Art Institute was my base of operations. Its public phones were usually empty, and its restroom was modern and clean with a full-length mirror perfect for last minute inspections before heading out on an interview.

My first couple weeks of job hunting, I'd hung out at the Public Library. Unlike the Art Institute, admission to the library was free. But the longer I'd gone without work, the more an old dread crept back into me: a feeling from high school, a memory of dreary Saturdays when, loaded with note cards for research papers that I was hopelessly behind on, I'd enter the Public Library only to end up wandering around lost, wasting the day.

The public phones in the Public Library were always busy. In the old restrooms fluids pooled on the cracked terrazzo, and the homeless hung around inside, smoking, sometimes washing out their clothes in the plugged sinks. Even on the brightest days I began to notice the gray, gloomy cast of the marble corridors and flights of stairs.

The Art Institute, by contrast, seemed flooded with light—not merely the light streaming from skylights or the track lights focused on paintings. The paintings themselves appeared to throw an internal light the way that oaks and maples seem aflame in fall, from the inside out. My favorite painters were the Impressionists. On days when it seemed as if I'd never find a job, when I was feeling desperate, I'd stand before their paintings and stare at them until it seemed I could almost step into their world, that if I

Continued

[1]greasy spoon—slang term for a cheap, inferior diner or restaurant

closed my eyes and then opened them I'd find myself waking under the red coverlet in Van Gogh's *Bedroom at Arles*. I would open my eyes in a room of pastel light to find that one of Degas' dancers, who had been sleeping beside me, had discarded her chemise and was stepping into her morning bath. Or I would awaken already strolling without a care in and out of patches of precise shade, one of the Sunday crowd along the river on the island of *La Grande Jatte*.

Yet, I would always end my walk through the paintings, standing before the diner in Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. Perhaps I needed its darkness to balance the radiance of the other paintings. It was night in Hopper's painting; the diner illuminated the dark city corner with a stark light it didn't seem capable of throwing on its own. Three customers sat at the counter as if waiting, not for something to begin, but rather to end, and I knew how effortless it would be to open my eyes and find myself waiting there, too.

Stuart Dybek
Contemporary American Writer

THE ASSIGNMENT

In the excerpt from "Nighthawks," the narrator suggests that people can find ways of helping themselves get through difficult times. For example, during his period of unemployment, the narrator uses his imagination to enter the worlds of his favorite paintings. By doing this, he appears to find the inner strength to get through the difficulty that he is facing.

What is your opinion of the idea that imagination can provide the inner strength people need to face difficult situations?

In your writing, you should

- consider the thoughts and feelings of the narrator in "Nighthawks"
- use your own observations and/or experiences to support your opinion

You may also refer to other literature that you have studied.

Present your ideas in PROSE.

SECTION II: FUNCTIONAL WRITING
(Suggested time: 45 minutes)

Use the situation described below to complete the assignment that follows.

THE SITUATION

Nalwen High School is participating in Nalwen Community Spirit Week, which runs from March 7 to 11, 1994, by planning a Salute-to-Volunteers evening. As part of its contribution to the activities, your English 33 class has accepted the responsibility of informing Ms Maggie Cameron that she has been named *Volunteer of the Year*. Ms Cameron is well known to Nalwen High School students for her volunteer work with teens. Your class has also agreed to present Ms Cameron with the prestigious Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award, known locally as the NOVA, during the Salute-to-Volunteers evening to be held on March 9 at Nalwen High School.

Your class has selected you to write a letter of invitation to Ms Cameron. In the letter, you are to include information about the program that has been planned for March 9.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Write a letter to Maggie Cameron informing her that she will be honored on March 9, 1994, by being named *Volunteer of the Year* and that she will be presented with the Nalwen Outstanding Volunteer Award. In your letter, provide Ms Cameron with helpful information that will enable her to participate in and enjoy the evening's program.

In your letter, BE SURE to

- state your purpose
- provide information that is necessary and helpful
- use an appropriate tone

Please Note: Letter format has been provided beginning on page 15.
Sign your letter PAT JONES, Nalwen High School.

SECTION III: RESPONSE TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION

SECTION III: RESPONSE TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION
(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Examine the photograph. Write a unified and coherent composition in response to the assignment that follows.

THE ASSIGNMENT

What idea(s) does the photograph communicate? Explain how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices reinforce the idea(s).

Appendix B: June 1994 Writing Assignments

SECTION I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO LITERATURE
(Suggested time: 75 minutes)

Read the excerpt from Lotta Dempsey's autobiography, *No Life for a Lady*, and complete the assignment that follows.

from NO LIFE FOR A LADY

Lotta Dempsey was a Canadian journalist. The following passage deals with an experience she had while covering the visit of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh to Ottawa in 1951. The mayor of Ottawa had arranged for the royal couple to sail down the Ottawa River followed by the press corps in another boat.

As her boat approaches the shore of the river, Lotta Dempsey attempts to beat the other reporters to a telephone.

Twin hazards menaced my next move. First, my eager-beaver instinct to reach the clubhouse and to telephone ahead of the others and file from notes I had made earlier. So, near-sighted Dempsey outsmarted herself, because the second hazard was that, unbeknownst to this Torontonian, the Eddy Match Company[1] upriver spewed shavings from its product into the water. At the spot where we were attempting to land, they had eddied into a curve in the shoreline, forming a sawdusty mat. Thinking it was solid ground, I leapt from the boat while others waited for it to touch the wharf. Alas, it was *not* solid ground. Slowly I sank up to my shoulders in icy murk. An empty beer carton surfaced as I went down.

The roars of laughter from my fellow reporters, richly deserved, soon were stifled in concern, and I was hauled out, cold and singularly unlovely, webbed in matchwood and slime. A photographer of a rival paper snapped the sorry scene, but graciously did not send it in, due to my venomous threats. My friends hauled me to the clubhouse, where a fire was burning in a pot-bellied stove. There was no telephone, and so the others rushed off. A lone attendant tried to comfort me—none of the waiting taxis would take me in, quite wisely—and in a few moments a man who had been duck hunting drove up. Grudgingly he agreed to return me to the Lord Elgin Hotel.[2] My heavy camel's-hair coat was crusted and sopping, and my plight was not eased by the fact that the hunter had

Continued

[1]the Eddy Match Company—a company located in Hull, Quebec that, at this time, produced quantities of wooden matches
[2]Lord Elgin Hotel—elegant Ottawa hotel

covered his back seat with canvas (the only reason, I imagine, he agreed to a Samaritan[3] gesture), strewn with the corpses of a dozen or so bloody wild fowl. By the time we arrived at the hotel, where he dropped me and fled, I looked like something out of a nightmare (or an Alice Cooper[4] performance today). As I slunk through the lobby, the cluster of built-in paper-reading sitters who always populate such places glanced up, startled. Some hastily decamped. Several disappeared into the recesses of the beer parlour.

In the elevator, the operator stopped and stared as I stood, dripping water forming a pool at my feet. I said crossly, "Well, get me to the tenth floor. Have you never seen a wet woman before?"

There was a postscript to my misadventure in the Ottawa River. My husband, who had been sitting at home reading while my small son listened to the tour report on the radio, was roused from his preoccupation with the child's remark, "Daddy, they say one of the women reporters just fell off the press boat into the river."

Without taking his eyes from his newspaper, my husband replied, "That will be your mother."

Lotta Dempsey (1905–1988)
Canadian Columnist and reporter whose career included positions with *The Edmonton Journal*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *Chatelaine Magazine*

[3]Samaritan—allusion to the "Good Samaritan" of Christ's parable, who helped the victim of a robbery when others would not

[4]Alice Cooper—*No Life for a Lady* was published in 1976. At that time, "Alice Cooper" was a popular rock singer known for unusual stage antics such as throwing chickens and watermelon into the audience

THE ASSIGNMENT

In the excerpt from *No Life for a Lady*, the author suggests that wanting desperately to succeed can affect a person's judgement so much that the result is failure rather than success. The author, for example, wants to "scoop" the other reporters so much that she makes an error of judgement and ends up being the last reporter to file a story.

What is your opinion of the idea that an intense desire for success can actually contribute to failure?

In your writing, you should

- consider Lotta Dempsey's thoughts and feelings
- use your own observations and/or experiences to support your opinion

You may also refer to other literature that you have studied.

Present your ideas in PROSE.

SECTION II: FUNCTIONAL WRITING
(Suggested time: 45 minutes)

Use the situation described below to complete the assignment that follows.

THE SITUATION

During Education Week, Nalwen High School is hosting an open house for all Grade 9 students in the County of Nalwen. The open house will be held on November 19, 1994, from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. High school students will act as guides for small groups of Grade 9 students. Each guide will take his or her small group on a tour of the high school and tell the Grade 9 students about the programs and facilities that are available at NHS. Other events are also planned.

As secretary of the Students' Union, you have accepted the responsibility of drafting the letter that will be sent to the principals of all County of Nalwen junior high schools. In the letter, you want to tell the principals about the proposed open house and request their support.

THE ASSIGNMENT

As secretary of the Students' Union of Nalwen High School, write a letter to the junior high school principals in the County of Nalwen. Tell the principals about the open house for Grade 9 students, which is to be held at Nalwen High School on November 19, 1994. Provide all of the information that the junior high school principals will need to promote the open house.

In your letter, BE SURE to

- state your purpose
- provide full information
- use an appropriate tone

Please Note: Letter format has been provided beginning on page 15.
Sign your letter PAT JONES, Secretary, Nalwen High School Students' Union.

SECTION III: RESPONSE TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION

SECTION III: RESPONSE TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION
(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Examine the photograph. Write a unified and coherent composition in response to the assignment that follows.

THE ASSIGNMENT

What idea(s) does the photograph communicate? Explain how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices reinforce the idea(s).

Appendix C: English 33 Scoring Criteria for 1994

Section I: Personal Response to Literature—Scoring Criteria for 1994

It is important to recognize that student responses to the Personal Response Assignment will vary from writing that treats personal views and ideas analytically and rather formally to writing that explores ideas experimentally and informally. Consequently, evaluation of the personal response on the diploma examination will be in the context of Louise Rosenblatt's suggestion:

The evaluation of the answer would be in terms of the amount of evidence that the [student] has actually read something and thought about it, not a question of whether necessarily he has thought about it in the way an adult would, or given an adult's "correct" answer.[1]

[1]Rosenblatt, Louise. "The Reader's Contribution in the Literary Experience." An interview with Lionel Wilson in *The English Quarterly 1* (Spring, 1981): 3–12.

Thought and Detail (curriculum concepts 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12)

When marking **Thought and Detail,** the marker should consider how effectively

- the assignment is addressed
- the detail supports and/or clarifies the response

5 **Excellent**: An insightful understanding of the reading selection is effectively demonstrated. The student's opinion, whether directly stated or implied, is perceptive and is appropriately supported by specific details. Support is well defined and appropriate.

4 **Proficient**: A well-considered understanding of the reading selection is appropriately demonstrated. The student's opinion, whether directly stated or implied, is thoughtful and is supported by details. Support is well defined and appropriate.

3 **Satisfactory**: A defensible understanding of the reading selection is clearly demonstrated. The student's opinion, whether directly stated or implied, is conventional but is plausibly supported. Support is general but functional.

2 **Limited**: An understanding of the reading selection may be evident but is vaguely demonstrated or is not always defensible or sustained. The student's opinion may be superficial, and support is scant and/or vague, and/or redundant.

1 **Poor**: An implausible conjecture concerning the reading selection is suggested. The student's opinion, if present, is irrelevant or incomprehensible. Support is inappropriate, inadequate, or absent.

INS **Insufficient**: The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment, or the writing is so deficient in length that it is not possible to assess thought and detail.

Continued

Section I: Personal Response to Literature—Scoring Criteria for 1994 (continued)

Organization (curriculum concepts 2, 3, 4)

When marking **Organization**, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- unified and consistent development
- clear and coherent order

5 **Excellent**: The beginning is constructed to provide direction for the reader and/or to encourage further reading. The ideas and situations are developed by sentences and paragraphs that flow smoothly and coherently to an appropriate and effective conclusion.

4 **Proficient**: The beginning is constructed to provide direction for the reader. The ideas and situations are developed by sentences and paragraphs that are coherently related. The conclusion is appropriate.

3 **Satisfactory**: The beginning, development, and conclusion are functional. Sentences and paragraphs are generally related, but coherence may falter on occasion.

2 **Limited**: The beginning and/or conclusion are ineffective. Relationships between sentences and between paragraphs are frequently unclear.

1 **Poor**: The beginning is nonfunctional, vague and/or unfocused. The conclusion, if present, is nonfunctional, vague and/or unfocused. Sentences and paragraphs are not coherently related.

Continued

Section I: Personal Response to Literature—Scoring Criteria for 1994 (continued)

Matters of Choice (curriculum concepts 3, 4)

When marking **Matters of Choice**, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer's choices contribute to the effectiveness of the composition. The marker should consider

- diction, including connotative language, imagery, idiomatic expressions, dialect
- syntax, including such choices as parallelism, balance, inversion, sentence length and variety

THE CONTRIBUTION OF STYLISTIC CHOICE TO THE CREATION OF VOICE SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

5 **Excellent**: Diction is appropriate and precise. Many sentences have been successfully structured for effect. Choices evident in the writing are usually effective and sometimes polished.

4 **Proficient**: Diction is appropriate and generally effective. Many sentences appear to have been purposefully structured for effect. Choices evident in the writing are often effective.

3 **Satisfactory**: Diction is appropriate but may be general rather than specific. Sentence structure is generally straightforward and clear. Choices evident in the writing are occasionally effective.

2 **Limited**: Diction is imprecise and/or inappropriate. Sentence structures are frequently ineffective and/or awkward. Choices evident in the writing are often ineffective.

1 **Poor**: Diction is inaccurate and/or vague. Sentence structures are misused to such an extent that clarity suffers. Choices evident in the writing are ineffective.

Continued

Section I: Personal Response to Literature—Scoring Criteria for 1994 (continued)

Matters of Correctness (curriculum concept 3)

When marking **Matters of Correctness,** the marker should consider the correctness of

- sentence construction (completeness, consistency, subordination, coordination, predication)
- usage (accurate use of words according to convention and meaning)
- grammar (agreement of subject-verb/pronoun-antecedent, pronoun reference, consistency of tense)
- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

PROPORTION OF ERROR TO COMPLEXITY AND LENGTH OF RESPONSE MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

5 **Excellent**: This writing demonstrates confident control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response and the circumstances.

4 **Proficient**: This writing demonstrates competent control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Minor errors in mechanics, grammar and/or in complex language structures are understandable considering the circumstances.

3 **Satisfactory**: This writing demonstrates control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. There may be occasional lapses in control of sentence construction and usage, and/or minor errors in grammar and mechanics. However, the communication is clear.

2 **Limited**: This writing demonstrates faltering control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechahics. The range of sentence construction problems and errors in usage, grammar, and/or mechanics blurs the clarity of communication.

1 **Poor**: This writing demonstrates lack of control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The unclear and incorrect sentence constructions and jarring errors in usage, grammar, and mechanics impede communication.

Section II: Functional Writing —Scoring Criteria for 1994

Thought and Detail (curriculum concepts 1, 3, 4, 5)

When marking **Thought and Detail**, the marker should consider

- awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone)
- effectiveness of development
- how well the assignment is addressed and the purpose fulfilled

5 **Excellent**: A precise awareness of audience is effectively sustained. Development of topic or function is clearly focused and effective. Significant information is presented, and this information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose.

4 **Proficient**: Awareness of audience is clearly sustained. Development of topic or function is generally effective. Significant information is presented, and this information is substantiated by appropriate details that efficiently fulfill the purpose.

3 **Satisfactory**: Awareness of audience is generally sustained. Development of topic or function is adequate. Sufficient information is presented, and this information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose.

2 **Limited**: Awareness of audience is evident but is not sustained. Development of topic or function is vaguely focused and ineffective. Essential information may be missing. Supporting details are scant, insignificant, and/or irrelevant. The purpose is only partially fulfilled.

1 **Poor**: Little awareness of audience is evident. Development of topic or function, if present, is obscure. Essential information and supporting details are inappropriate or lacking. The purpose is not fulfilled.

INS **Insufficient**: The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment, or the writing is so deficient in length that it is not possible to assess thought and detail.

Continued

Section II: Functional Writing—Scoring Criteria for 1994 (continued)

Writing Skills (curriculum concepts 2, 3, 4, 5)

When marking **Writing Skills,** the marker should consider Matters of Choice AND Matters of Correctness.

PROPORTION OF ERROR TO COMPLEXITY AND LENGTH OF RESPONSE MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

5 **Excellent**: The selection and use of words and structures are effective. This writing demonstrates confident control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

4 **Proficient**: The selection and use of words and structures are usually effective. This writing demonstrates competent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

3 **Satisfactory**: The selection and use of words and structures are generally effective. This writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

2 **Limited**: The selection and use of words and structures are frequently ineffective. This writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

1 **Poor**: The selection and use of words and structures are ineffective. This writing demonstrates lack of control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication—Scoring Criteria for 1994

Total Impression (curriculum concepts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 16, 17)

When marking **Total Impression,** the marker should consider how effectively the details selected from the photograph and the discussion of these details contribute to a plausible and consistent interpretation or explanation of the photograph's meaning. The marker should also consider unity, coherence, Matters of Choice, and Matters of Correctness.

5 **Excellent**: Interpretation of the photograph is insightful and is in the form of an effective generalized idea or theme. Specific details used for support are purposefully chosen and enhance clarity. Sentences and paragraphs flow smoothly and coherently. The selection and use of words and structures are effective. This writing demonstrates confident control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

4 **Proficient**: Interpretation of the photograph is well considered and is in the form of a generalized idea or theme. Specific details used for support are well defined and accurate. Sentences and paragraphs are coherently related. The selection and use of words and structures are usually effective. This writing demonstrates competent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

3 **Satisfactory**: Interpretation of the photograph is conventional and may be in the form of a maxim or moral. Details used to support a main idea are clear but tend to be generalized. Sentences and paragraphs are generally related, but coherence may falter on occasion. The selection and use of words and structures are generally effective. This writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

2 **Limited**: Explanation of the photograph is vague and uncertain and may not act as an interpretation of the photograph as a whole. Details are simply listed or, when used for support, are inappropriate and/or unclear. Relationships between sentences and between paragraphs are frequently unclear. The selection and use of words and structures are frequently ineffective. This writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

1 **Poor**: Explanation of the photograph is inappropriate or incomprehensible. Details are irrelevant, inaccurate, or absent. Sentences and paragraphs are not coherently related. The selection and use of words and structures are ineffective. This writing demonstrates lack of control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

INS **Insufficient**: The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment, or the writing is so deficient in length that it cannot be assessed.

Credits

January 1994

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